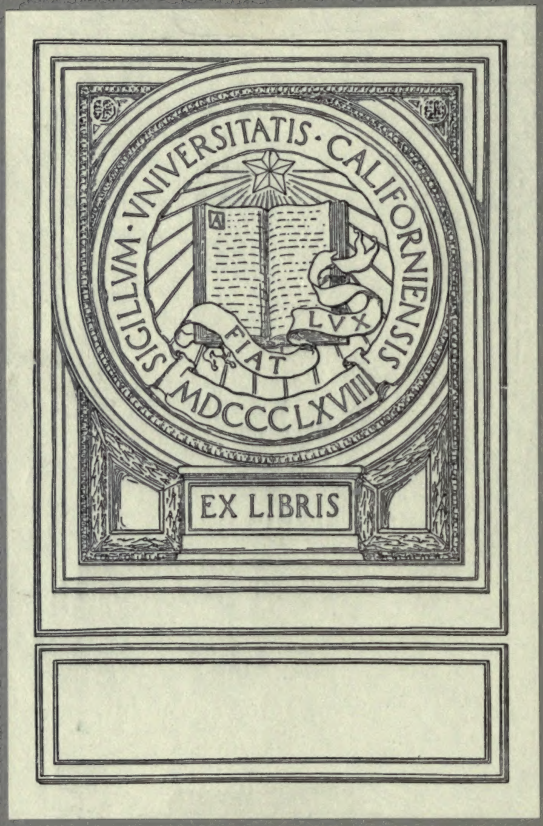

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THE DUC DE LAUZUN

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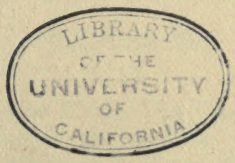
DUC DE LAUZUN

AND THE

COURT OF MARIE ANTOINETTE

FROM THE FRENCH OF

GASTON MAUGRAS



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CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

1774.

PAGE

Lauzun's residence at Mouzon—His plans for the future—Mme. de Lauzun is inoculated—The Duc's visit to Auteuil—The new Ministry 1

CHAPTER II.

1774.

Life at Mouzon—Journey to Warsaw—Return to Mouzon—Studies relating to Poland—A scheme for an alliance between France and Russia—Again to Warsaw—Visits to Dresden and Berlin—Frederick of Prussia—Prince Henry—Mlle. von Hatzfeldt—Quarrel with the Princess—Prince Adam sends for Lauzun to Warsaw—Negotiations with M. de Stackelberg—Letter to M. de Vergennes—Stay at the Court of Warsaw—A quarrel with the Grand-General Branecki—Departure for France . . 13

CHAPTER III.

1775.

The Court in 1775—The King—The Queen—The Queen's friends : the Princesse de Lamballe, Mme. Dillon, the Princesse de Guéménée—The Royal Family . . 31

CHAPTER IV.

1775.

Lauzun arrives at Versailles—An interview with M. de Vergennes—Intimacy with Mme. Dillon and Mme. de Guéménée—The Queen receives him kindly—Correspondence with M. de Stackelberg—Corn riots—Lauzun goes to Sarreguemines—The Coronation—Check to the negotiations with M. de Vergennes—Rupture with Princess Czartoriska—Residence at Sarreguemines—Journey through the Palatinate 46

CHAPTER V.

1775.

PAGE

Lauzun returns to Paris—The influenza—Lady Barrymore—Her acquaintance with Lauzun—The Queen's partiality for the Comtesse Jules de Polignac—Mme. de Vaudreuil and Besenval—The Abbé de Vermond's anxieties . . 66

CHAPTER VI.

1775.

Changes in manners—The taste for English ideas and habits—Races—Gambling—Opera-balls—Dress . . . 78

CHAPTER VII.

1775.

Lauzun in favour—His political plans—He lays them before the Queen—Correspondence with Catherine of Russia—M. de Luxembourg's schemes—Catherine proposes to Lauzun that he should enter her service—A conversation with the Queen—The heron feather—Lauzun visits Chanteloup—The affair of the Duc de Guines—Dismissal of Turgot and Malesherbes—Necker as Finance Minister—M. de Saint-Germain at the War Office—Reforms—The Order of Perseverance—Death of the Prince de Conti 91

CHAPTER VIII.

1777.

The Emperor Joseph II.'s visit—Its consequences . . 115

CHAPTER IX.

1776—1778.

Lauzun's debts—Difficulties with his wife and family—Generous offers from M. de Voyer and from Lady Barrymore—The Queen refuses to intervene—Arrangement with M. de Guéménée—Mme. de Guéménée slanders Mme. de Lauzun—Choiseul's indignation—His interview with Mme. de Guéménée 125

CHAPTER X.

1778.

Lauzun sets out for Vaucouleurs—He takes a holiday and visits England—Preliminaries of the American War—Franklin in Paris—Lauzun recalled to Paris—He returns to London—Rupture with England—Lauzun goes to Ardres—Colonel of the foreign Marine forces—Nominated to go to India—Naval battle—Lauzun's last interview with the Queen—A visit to Hautefontaine—Mme. de Martainville—Masquerade at Court . . 137

CHAPTER XI.

1778.

The conquest of Senegal—Lauzun returns to Paris . . 162

CHAPTER XII.

1779.

Lauzun is ill-received at Versailles—A game at faro—Mme. de Coigny's generous conduct—Lauzun resigns his commission—He is appointed Inspector-General of Prisoners of War—Plans for invading England—Lauzun and M. de Vaux—Camps at Paramé and at Vaucieux—Returns to Paris—Intimacy between Mme. de Coigny and Mme. Dillon—Creation of the Lauzun Hussars . 174

CHAPTER XIII.

1780.

An army to be sent to America—Lauzun and his legion to form part of it—Fersen also joins—The strange adventure of M. Dillon—Across the Atlantic—A naval battle—They reach Rhode Island 190

CHAPTER XIV.

1780.

The Americans receive them badly—The camp at Newport—Depression of the troops at the delay—August 15—A visit from Indians—Rochambeau goes to see Washington—Life at Newport—Winter quarters—Lauzun and Fersen—Rochambeau returns to France—Lauzun is sent to Lebanon 202

CHAPTER XV.

1781.

PAGE

Mutiny in Pennsylvania—Death of M. de Ternay—Washington's visit to M. de Rochambeau—Arrival of the *Astrée*—News from France—M. de Montbarrey's place taken by M. de Ségur; M. de Sartines' by M. de Castries—Marriage of the Duc de Montbazon to Mlle. de Conflans—Death of Mme. de Mazarin; and of Lady Barrymore—M. de Rochambeau's return—The campaign of 1781—Lauzun's distinguished service—The siege of York (U.S.A.)—Cavalry encounter between Lauzun's hussars and Tarleton's dragoons—York capitulates—Lauzun is sent to Versailles with the news 221

CHAPTER XVI.

1781—1782.

Lauzun's arrival in France—Death of M. Maurepas—M. de Ségur's bad treatment of Lauzun—Mme. de Coigny and the Guéménées—"Perdita" in Paris—Birth of the Dauphin—The dinner at the Hotel de Ville—M. de Coigny leaves for America—Lauzun is ordered to rejoin his legion 238

CHAPTER XVII.

1782.

Lauzun sails for America on the *Gloire*—Mme. de Coigny's grief—A storm obliges the *Gloire* to put into Paimbœuf—Lauzun re-embarks on the *Aigle*—Detention at the Azores—Received by the French Consul—Visit to a Portuguese convent—A sea fight—Lauzun's illness—Arrival in America—M. de Rochambeau returns to France 250

CHAPTER XVIII.

1782—1783.

Lauzun in America—News from France—Death of M. de Voyer, and of Mme. Dillon—M. de Guéménée's insolvency—Lauzun returns to France—His Volunteers are disbanded—The Lauzun Hussars 275

CHAPTER XIX.

1783—1784.

PAGE

Mme. de Coigny's pleasure at seeing Lauzun—A journey to England—Flattering reception by the Prince of Wales—Return to France—The Palais Royal circle—The Duc de Chartres in opposition—State of Society in 1783—The financial situation—The general mania for the supernatural—Cagliostro—Lauzun interviews the devil—M. de Caylus and his tragic end 290

CHAPTER XX.

1785.

Birth of the Duc de Normandie—The affair of the necklace—Arrest of the Cardinal de Rohan—Indignation and intrigues of the Rohan family—The Cardinal is acquitted—Scandals about the Queen—Death of the Duc de Choiseul 311

CHAPTER XXI.

1785—1787.

Lauzun and Mme. de Coigny—The Prince de Ligne—Mme. de Fleury—The adventure of the rose—Two duels—The King affronts the Marquis de Conflans—M. de Conflans' death—The Palais Royal faction—The Duc d'Orléans and Mme. de Buffon 321

CHAPTER XXII.

1787—1788.

The first Treaty of Commerce—The English in Egypt—Lauzun's remarkable foresight—M. d'Ormesson—M. de Calonne—Assembly of Notables—Mme. de Coigny's parrot—Loménie de Brienne—The Notables are dismissed—The Duc d'Orléans in banishment—Retrenchments—Indignation at Court—Mme. de Polignac's ingratitude—Mme. d'Ossun—Necker succeeds to Brienne—Death of Maréchal de Biron—Lauzun takes his name as Duc de Biron 333

CHAPTER XXIII.

1789—1790.

PAGE

Elections for the States-General—The 14th of July—The 4th of August—The 5th-6th of October—The Duc d'Orléans leaves for London—Speeches in the Assembly by Mirabeau and Biron—Biron, appointed Governor of Corsica, declines to go there—Biron advises the Duc d'Orléans to return to Paris—Mirabeau and the Court—Return of the Duc d'Orléans—He is made Admiral and received by the King—His treatment at the Tuileries . 353

CHAPTER XXIV.

1791.

The so-called revolt of the Lauzun Hussars—Forged bills signed "Biron"—Mme. de Lamothe—The Royal Family plan their flight—The journey to Varennes—Mme. de Coigny's adventure—She leaves for London—Her letters to Lauzun—A letter from Mme. de Fleury . 375

CHAPTER XXV.

1792.

Biron is sent to join the army in the North—Narbonne is Minister of War—Talleyrand goes to London, and with him Biron—Biron imprisoned for debt—Mme. de Coigny's despair—M. de Courchamp stands surety for him—Biron returns to France and to Valenciennes . 390

CHAPTER XXVI.

1792.

Death of the Emperor Leopold—Narbonne is dismissed and M. de Grave appointed—Mme. de Coigny's alarms—Dumouriez Minister for Foreign Affairs—Correspondence with Lauzun—Dumouriez' plan of campaign—Dillon is assassinated—Biron marches on Mons—His return to Valenciennes—Rochambeau retires—Biron refuses the chief command—He is appointed to the Army of the Rhine 405

CHAPTER XXVII.

1792.

Biron at Strasbourg—August 10—Letters from Mme. de Coigny and Mme. de Buffon 427

CHAPTER XXVIII.

1793.

PAGE

The trial of the King—The Army of Nice—Arrest of the Duc d'Orléans—Of the Duc de Montpensier—Biron's distress of mind—His generous conduct—He is sent to join the army at La Rochelle 445

CHAPTER XXIX.

1793.

Biron at Bordeaux—He arrives at Niort—The defeat at Fontenay—The state of the army—The rout at Saumur—Rossignol is arrested—Biron resigns his command—His resignation is refused—Victory at Parthenay—Release of Rossignol—Biron is dismissed the service—Called to Paris—Imprisoned in the Abbaye . . . 471

CHAPTER XXX.

1793.

Biron's defence—The Queen is executed—The Duc d'Orléans—Biron tried and condemned—His execution . . 496

EPILOGUE 507

INDEX 517

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.

Some little abridgment in a few passages has been sanctioned by the Author.

THE DUC DE LAUZUN

AND THE

COURT OF MARIE ANTOINETTE.

CHAPTER I.

1774.

Lauzun's residence at Mouzon—His plans for the future—Madame de Lauzun is inoculated—The Duc's visit to Auteuil—The new Ministry.

We left the Duc de Lauzun, at the age of twenty-seven, in the solitude of Mouzon, abandoning himself more completely than ever to the mad passion that held him fast; he had no other idea or purpose than to consecrate his life to the lovely and delightful Princess Czartoriska.

Given over entirely to his dreams of love and schemes for the future, he had completely altered his mode of life; he devoted himself almost exclusively to the care of his regiment and the new studies to which he had set himself. Ardently desiring to be within reach of the Princess, he saw no better way

of achieving this end than getting himself sent to Warsaw as a representative of the French King; but for that it was necessary to be up to the mark in politics, and have a thorough knowledge of the affairs of Poland, Russia and Prussia. He therefore collected round him all the documents that could enlighten him, and proceeded to study them with the greatest fervour. The first division of Poland, which had been made in 1772, and all the consequences that followed from it, gave to these studies immense interest and a living actuality.

He was disturbed in this studious life, so new to his experience, by a letter from the Duchesse, who announced that she was about to submit to "the operation of inoculation." Lauzun was too much a gentleman to leave his wife alone on so critical an occasion; as soon as he knew of her determination he did not hesitate to leave Mouzon, and spend some little time in Paris. It was indeed at that time a very serious step to decide on; hitherto preventive measures against small-pox had been regarded with extreme distrust, and many persons thought them more dangerous than useful. The names of those who had braved the ordeal in their own persons or those of their children were marked.[1]

The swift and unexpected death of Louis XV. did

[1] In 1756 the Duc d'Orléans had had his two children inoculated by Tronchin; and in the same year the Maréchale de Belle-Isle did the same by her son, the Comte de Gisors. The inoculation of M. de Chastellux made a great sensation; in 1775 Buffon, on welcoming him to the French Academy, complimented him on having been the first of its Members to venture on submitting to the operation.

more to promote inoculation than all Tronchin's promises. It struck people's minds all the more forcibly because it was followed by other terrible cases.

Hardly had Louis XV. closed his eyes when Mesdames, who had nursed him with great devotion, fell ill of the same complaint, and for several days were in great danger. Far from feeling pity for the fate of the unhappy princesses, who were paying so dearly for their fidelity, the public only uttered indecent wishes that they might soon rejoin the deceased King. However, against hope, Mesdames recovered:

"The exterminating angel has sheathed his sword," wrote Madame du Deffant. "We shall see these three old maids lording it again at the young Court, and meddling in everything; and they have become so interesting that it will be thought that the least that can be done is to hand them the kingdom to turn upside down." (June 2nd, 1774.)

After the catastrophe that had fallen on the royal family, it was decided that all the Princes were to be inoculated. On June 17, 1774, the King went to Marly, with the Queen, Monsieur, Madame, the Comte and Comtesse d'Artois; the operation was performed by the physician, Richard, who on the occasion was nicknamed *sans peur* (the fearless).

This time the example set by such high rank was followed unhesitatingly by a great number of persons, and especially by all about the Court.

Madame de Lauzun had already been inoculated by Gatti; but it would seem that she had not unlimited confidence in the Italian doctor, for she insisted on its being repeated, and this time by the Suttons, very famous English physicians, whom their brethren in Paris naturally regarded as contemptible quacks. To undergo the operation and its consequences Madame de Lauzun came into the neighbourhood of Paris, to the house of Mme. de Boufflers, at Auteuil. The inoculation was perfectly successful, and the amiable Duchesse had a very sufficient number of spots.

Lauzun, faithful to his functions as sick nurse, also came to Auteuil. All his friends, happy to have him once more among them, did him honour, and everybody complimented him on the good feeling he had thus shown.

Mme. de Lauzun, however, was not lonely. While confined to the house she received many visitors, who offered her the consolations of friendship. The Maréchale de Luxembourg and Mme. du Deffant constantly came to sup with her; there they met M. de Gontaut and other intimate friends. Mme. du Deffant was never tired of the Duc. "What good company he is!" she would exclaim; "he is perpetually inventing some capital jest."

One of the favourite amusements of the day was composing epitaphs for the deceased King. They were for the most part far from flattering. The

small circle surrounding Mme. de Lauzun would not fail to follow the fashion.[1]

If no regret was felt for the departed monarch, the enthusiasm for the new occupant of the throne was almost unexampled. The beginnings of a reign had never called forth more unanimous expressions of affection and attachment. The Royal Family had retired to the Chateau of La Muette during the illness of Mesdames; the suburbs of Paris were crowded with inhabitants. From six in the morning shouts of "Vive le Roi" were heard, and continued without interruption till sunset. A jeweller made a fortune by selling mourning snuff-boxes, with a portrait of the young Queen set in a mount of black shagreen, and bearing the punning legend, "La consolation dans le chagrin" (Consolation in chagrin or grief).

But at this moment there was one fashion which swamped all others; it was the day of "heads,"

[1] These are some of the shafts sharpened under the groves of Auteuil:—

"Ci gît Louis, ce pauvre roi;
On dit qu'il fut bon, mais à quoi?"

"Here lies Louis, the poor King. They say he was good—but good for what?"

"Ci gît Louis dit le quinzième;
Et des Bien-aimés le deuxième;
Dieu nous préserve du troisième!"

"Here lies Louis called the fifteenth; the second named Well-beloved. God preserve us from the third!"

Finally this, eloquent in its brevity:—

"Ci gît Louis par la grâce de Dieu!"

"Here lies Louis, by the grace of God!"

A story was told that a Capuchin, who wrote verses, said: "I mean to sing the praises of Louis XV." "Oh," was the reply, "you will have to hiss rather than sing, and emulate the blackbird rather than the nightingale."

monumental head-dressing, amazing structures of which no idea can be formed in our day. Every event, political or other, found expression on the heads of the fine ladies. Hairdressers could give full liberty to their imagination, however extravagant; they were sure of shocking no one.

Inoculation having become the rage, of course there was a *coiffure à l'inoculation:* it was composed of a serpent, a club, a rising sun, and an olive-tree loaded with fruit. Who could fail to understand allusions so self-evident? The serpent symbolizes medicine; the club is the skill it has used in overcoming the monster of small-pox; the rising sun is emblematic of the young King to whom all hopes turn; and the olive is taken to mean the peace and gladness felt in every heart at the successful issue of the operation to which the Princes have submitted.

Mme. de Lauzun was too much a woman of the world not to conform to the new fashion, and during her convalescence at Auteuil she gaily wore a cap *à l'inoculation.* After the King's death she, like the rest of the world, wore an appropriate head-dress: on the left a tall cypress made of black flowers and tied with a knot of black crape; on the right a large bunch of corn lying on a cornucopia, out of which fell a profusion of figs, melons, grapes, and other fruits. Nothing could show more clearly that, while lamenting the dead King, much was expected of the new one.

These extravagances of fashion, far from shocking

Mme. de Lauzun, seem to have pleased her, for as soon as she was out in the world again she appeared in Mme. du Deffant's drawing-room, her head decorated with a structure which made a sensation. The admiration of her contemporaries has transmitted its details to posterity. It presented a whole landscape elaborately modelled; first of all a stormy lake, ducks swimming near the shore, a sportsman about to fire at them; at the top a windmill, and an Abbé flirting with the miller's wife; below, close to the ear, the miller leading his ass.[1]

Nor was it in fashion only that the accession of Louis XVI. had produced changes. Lauzun, on arriving at Versailles, found the whole political world in a commotion, and Court intrigues seething furiously. The faction of the Choiseuls was in great excitement, and making every effort to recover power. Lauzun gave his uncle every possible mark of attachment; but he did not believe in his return to power, and the event proved him right.

Let us now rapidly see who the new personages are that have taken the place of those we have known.

As was the custom at the beginning of every reign, the Court officials were not merely dismissed with thanks, but sent away in disgrace. Marie Antoinette did her best to secure this end, and had the satisfaction of conducing to the ruin of all those who had defied her when she was but the Dauphiness.

[1] *Journal de Madame d'Éloffe.*

Mme. du Barry, to begin with, was banished to the Abbey of Pont-aux-Dames, two leagues from Meaux. The Duc d'Aiguillon was the next to be sacrificed. Mme. du Deffant, quite delighted, wrote to Mme. de Choiseul: "Well, the impious Ahab is overthrown: joy is universal. 'Men, women, children, all embrace with joy, and bless the Lord and him whom He may send.'[1]

"He, be he who he may, will be welcome. . . . In short, they are sweeping out the Court, and when it is thoroughly cleaned, the furniture that is to grace it will be replaced. I cannot tell you how glad I am." (June 4, 1774.)

This precious furniture, of course, means M. and Mme. de Choiseul, who, for nearly four years now, had been kicking their heels in their magnificent exile at Chanteloup.

Maupeou and the Abbé Terray shared M. d'Aiguillon's fate; the glee caused by their disgrace was universally displayed. At all the cross streets in Paris bonfires were piled up, where these objects of public hatred were burned in effigy; that there should be no mistake, the Chancellor was dressed in his gown, the Deputy as an Abbé. A man named Bouteille tried to quell the tumult—he was knocked down. "It is only a broken bottle!" the people cried, and were wilder than before. The excitement was so great that serious riots were apprehended; the

[1] Quoted from Racine:—

"Enfants, femmes, viellards, s'embrassent avec joie.
Bénissent le Seigneur et celui qu'il envoie."

French guards remained under arms for seven days and nights.[1]

Driving out Maupeou did not seem sufficient; his work, too, must be overthrown. The Parlement he had assembled was dissolved, and the old Parlement recalled, to the great joy of some and the great indignation of others. "I have enabled the French crown to win in a lawsuit which has been going on for many centuries," said Maupeou. "Louis XVI. chooses to appeal, and he is master; but he will regret it bitterly." The Duc d'Orléans and the Duc de Chartres refused to recognize the new Parlement.

To clean out the Court and exile ministers was all very well, but things must be patched up again. This was the young King's greatest difficulty. Whom could he choose for his Prime Minister? All parties vied in their intrigues; each one hoped to

[1] The following epitaphs were composed for Maupeou :—

"Ci gît Maupeou l'abominable.
Au diable il a rendu l'esprit.
Passant, ne crains point son semblable;
Car jamais monstre n'a produit."

"Here lies the abominable Maupeou. His spirit has returned to the devil. Reader, fear not that you will meet his like; no monster ever produced such another."

These lines were written on the disgrace of the hated ministers, and entitled: "*Vinaigre des quatre voleurs*"—

"Amis, connaissez-vous l'enseigne ridicule
Qu'un peintre de Saint Luc fait pour les parfumeurs?
Il met en un flacon, en forme de pilule,
Boynes, Maupeou, Terray, sous leur propres couleurs;
Il y joint D'Aiguillon, et puis il l'intitule:
Vinaigre des quatre voleurs."

"Friends, do you know the absurd sign that a painter of Saint Luke makes for perfumers? He shows in a phial, in the form of a pill, Boynes, Maupeou and Terray in their proper colours; he adds D'Aiguillon, and he calls the mixture: 'Four thieves' vinegar.'"

win; and Louis XVI. was a victim to solicitations from all sides. The Queen, who had remained greatly attached to Choiseul, proposed the exile; but notwithstanding her influence she struck on an invincible opposition. "Choiseul means extravagance," Louis XVI. repeatedly said, remembering his father's hatred of Choiseul, and nothing could conquer his objection. However, the Queen so far succeeded that Choiseul was no longer to remain in disgrace; he was allowed to reappear at Court. She hoped that his wit and his charm would produce more effect than the most pressing entreaties. The first time the exile presented himself at Versailles the King said: "You have grown fat, Monsieur de Choiseul; you are losing your hair and growing bald." And that was all. This cold, satirical reception was a painful blow to the fallen minister; he understood that his hour was not yet come, and next day he gloomily set out to return to Chanteloup.

His adherents, however, did not lose courage; they all said it was merely a matter of time, and that the Duc would soon be indispensable. How could a weak and irresolute King long resist the solicitations of a pretty young wife who was in the habit of being obeyed?

Meanwhile, a Prime Minister must be found. By the advice of Madame Adélaide, the King sent for M. de Machault, a skilful administrator and a stern judge, intending to place matters in his hands. The same courier carried a letter to M. de Maurepas, who lived in the same neighbourhood, and who was

to be consulted as to the funeral. M. de Maurepas arrived first, and was at once received by the King. At this moment the usher came in to announce that the Council had assembled. The King rose, was embarrassed, dared not dismiss his visitor, and went into the council chamber, followed by M. de Maurepas, who, believing himself to be Prime Minister, sat down and took part in the business. To this singular chance he owed his fortune of governing France for ten years.

When M. de Machault arrived, an hour or two later, the King made a few commonplace remarks and allowed him to depart.

Who and what was M. de Maurepas? In what hands had chance placed the destinies of France?

He was a man of seventy, banished some twenty-five years since for a ballad attacking Madame de Pompadour. At the age of twenty he had been minister under Louis XV.[1] His light and pleasant wit, and easy temper, made him a favourite. His advanced age seemed to promise reassuring experience; but, unluckily, his white hairs covered a strangely frivolous nature and incurable levity. The only aim of his administration was to avoid shocks: he only cared to keep his place and end his days in peace. In this he succeeded, but to the great detriment of the kingdom.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was given to M.

[1] He had from his father, in 1715, the promise of the reversion to the office of Secretary of State. He held the post from 1725 to 1749, at which date he was exiled to Bourges. He died in 1781.

de Vergennes, a man of honour, but of no great capacity. M. de Muy was appointed to the War Office; M. de Sartines to the Admiralty: M. de Miroménil took Maupeou's place, and Turgot filled the Abbé Terray's.

We may now leave the new reign to establish itself, and return to Lauzun on the road to Mouzon, whither our hero was hastening, to return as soon as the health of the Duchesse was so far restored as to occasion no further anxiety.

CHAPTER II.

1774.

Life at Mouzon—Journey to Warsaw—Return to Mouzon—Studies relating to Poland—A scheme for an alliance between France and Russia—Again to Warsaw—Visits to Dresden and Berlin—Frederick of Prussia—Prince Henry—Mlle. von Hatzfeldt—Quarrel with the Princess—Prince Adam sends for Lauzun to Warsaw—Negotiations with M. de Stackelberg—Letter to M. de Vergennes—Stay at the Court of Warsaw—A quarrel with the Grand-General Branecki—Departure for France.

No sooner was Lauzun at Mouzon once more, than he began with fresh energy to study the political situation of Russia and Poland. The letters he received from the Princess, after being rather frequent, suddenly ceased altogether. Lauzun, anxious, restless, unable to content himself, decided on sending a messenger all the way to Warsaw. The news he brought back was anything rather than satisfactory. The Princess had had some vehement discussions with her husband, and had been driven to making an avowal of her love. Although this delicate confession had been received with magnanimity, and her husband had behaved like the gentleman that he was, Mme. Czartoriska was sinking under the

burthen of anxiety and distress of mind; her strength was broken and crushed.

This sad news quite overset Lauzun. Fully convinced that his presence would restore to his ladylove the courage she failed in, he did not hesitate to start, alone and secretly, to go to see her. He informed those about him that he was about to spend three weeks in the country, with friends near Frankfort, and set out. On reaching Warsaw, after many delays, he learnt that the Princess was not there, but at Powonski, a neighbouring place where the Princes Czartoriski had built, in 1770, a magnificent palace full of treasures of art.[1] He went on therefore to Powonski; but, as he would not on any account be recognized, he was obliged to resort to cunning to get into the house.

After wandering round the park for a whole day, he decided on getting in at night, and taking the risk of scaling the walls. He waited till the Cossack sentries had all gone to rest, and at eleven o'clock he boldly climbed the wall. He was received by two mastiffs, who were making their rounds and prepared to do their duty by tearing him to pieces. But Providence, always kind to lovers, would not suffer so worthy an enterprise to come to such a deplorable end. What was the Duc's amazement on seeing the story of Androcles repeat itself for his benefit. The fiercest of the dogs fawned at his feet, and covered him with caresses. He then recognized Cæsar, a noble dog that he had given to the Princess when

[1] This palace was destroyed during the Polish revolutions.

they were in England. The faithful and intelligent brute not only protected him against the other dog, but led the way to the door of the house. There Lauzun's lucky star led him to see a waiting woman whom he knew to be devoted to him. By her connivance he was led to the Princess's apartments. "I expected you," said the lady, simply, and threw herself into his arms.

Lauzun was, however, well aware of the imprudence of his conduct; he could not remain in Warsaw without being discovered, and exposing the Princess to serious discomfort. At the end of two days the Duc made up his mind to depart, leaving his friend more calm and happy in this proof of his attachment. A strangely romantic scapegrace indeed was this Lauzun, travelling across Europe in the depth of winter to spend a few hours at the feet of the woman he loved. How is it that posterity has regarded him as a soulless, heartless Lovelace? how can it be said that a man who could do this was incapable of love?

On his return to Mouzon, Lauzun recommenced his political studies. The Princess, to whom he had spoken of them, approved of them highly, and encouraged him by the most affectionate letters. As the result of his studies and meditations, Lauzun wrote a long report on the situation of Poland and the three parties to the division; his views and ideas were all favourable to Poland; but the writer urged on Russia that she should break with Prussia, and contract an alliance with France.

This project for an alliance between these two nations was not new, but hitherto it had never been carried into effect. Diderot, at the time of his visit to St. Petersburg, had on several occasions spoken of it to Catherine.[1]

Notwithstanding their delicate position towards each other, Lauzun had remained on very good terms with Prince Adam Czartoriski, and thinking that his précis might serve the Prince's secret plans, he sent it to him. The Prince, fascinated by this brilliant scheme, so favourable to his own country, communicated it to M. de Stackelberg, the Empress's minister in Poland.[2] He too read the paper, and

[1] The French Ambassador to Russia writes, under date of December 31, 1773: "The conferences between Catherine II. and Diderot are incessant, and longer every day. He tells me, and I have reasons for not doubting it, that he has described to her the dangers of her alliance with the King of Russia and the value of ours. The Empress, far from blaming this freedom, has encouraged him by gestures and in words; but she, on her part, has exactly described Diderot by saying "that on some points he is a hundred years old, and on others only ten."

The French Minister writes again to his Government, November 20, 1773: "In the last conferences I have held with this minister (Panin), he talked to me in a very remarkable manner. He told me that the Empress, on mounting the throne, had formed a project for making her country independent of other Courts; that to play such a part Russia must ally herself with France, with whom she can never have any immediate quarrel; that no other alliance could be so little onerous to the Russian Empire; and that her interests would not be antagonistic to the extension of our trade. He added that he would not trouble himself to discuss the obstacles that had been urged on the Empress, but that when there should be peace, he hoped to have health enough to give himself up entirely to a task so useful to his sovereign.

[2] M. de Stackelberg was a Livonian, and had just been accredited to Warsaw. He was a gentle, cultivated man, and very fond of France. He was not deficient in enlightenment, was right-minded, and had great versatility.

being no less pleased with it than Prince Adam, he forwarded it to the Empress at Moscow.

Lauzun did not rest content with this first success, he also wrote to M. de Vergennes, the new Minister for Foreign Affairs, addressing to him a long Note on the affairs of Poland and the Empress's dispositions.[1] His wish was to see France play the part of a mediating power; he flattered himself with the hope that an alliance between the two countries might be the outcome, and that he might be entrusted with the negotiations and the management of it.

Pending such a result Lauzun remained at Mouzon.

Meanwhile some indiscretion had betrayed the fact of his last journey to Poland. Prince Adam had expressed himself strongly, and the Princess implored Lauzun not to repeat his visit as had been agreed between them. Lauzun, believing that this urgent request could only be the result of illness or ill-founded fears, determined, notwithstanding, to set out at the end of September. At Strasbourg, where he stopped, a second letter from the Princess desired him on no account to proceed: to this he paid no heed.[2] At Frankfort another letter, even more

[1] In the French National archives, T 1527.

[2] The following autograph letter to his man of business, again proves the authenticity of the memoirs:—

"Strasbourg, September 27, 1774.

"I have a hundred thousand letters to write before leaving Strasbourg. I have only time to return your schedule, signed, and a letter for M. Dunetz. I will write to you from Leipzig, where I shall stay a few days. You know my regard for you.—D. Lauzun." (French National archives, T 478[2].)

pressing than the former. But Lauzun was in the state of restless anxiety when the voice of prudence is inaudible; to remain far from the woman he adored seemed to him impossible. He made his way to Warsaw: once more they met. He remained in hiding and in no small peril in the environs for some weeks; but at the end of a month Mme. Czartoriska told Lauzun that she had found herself compelled to confess everything to her husband, who had insisted that she should never see Lauzun again. "My tears were my only reply," she added, "how could I say I would give you up? You know my husband; ill-natured persons have soured him. He may be very much annoyed for a time, but his character is at bottom kind and indulgent. He is not by nature jealous, and will soon see you again without any aversion."

On the strength of these comforting assurances Lauzun consented to follow the lady's advice. It was agreed that his journey was to be kept a secret, and that he should go to spend some time at Dresden and Berlin, whence he might come to Warsaw apparently by chance, and show himself publicly.

All being arranged, they parted once more.

Lauzun's stay at Dresden was of short duration. Received by the Elector with the honour due to his name and his reputation, he was most popular with the ladies. But the Electress's attentions were in fact too pressing, and if we may believe him, he thought it prudent to escape, and set out post-haste

for Berlin. Such a fit of prudery was so rare with him as to deserve mention.

Frederick of Prussia treated Lauzun kindly; he entertained him several times at his table and held many conversations with him. Lauzun always came away under the spell of that brilliant talker. "Fine arts, war, medicine, literature, and religion; philosophy, morality, history and jurisprudence, all in turn came under review. All that could be said that was most various and striking flowed from his lips in a very sweet tone of voice, rather low, and as pleasant as the movement of his lips, which was inexpressibly graceful." [1]

The King on his part was so delighted with Lauzun, that he begged him to get himself nominated Minister from France to Berlin,[2] offering indeed to take all the necessary steps to secure the consent of the Court of Versailles. Lauzun, whose aims were different, resisted all his solicitations.

M. de Pons, the French Minister in Prussia, was away on leave; Lauzun took advantage of this to send to M. de Vergennes some notes on the political situation of Prussia. These studies would, as he conceived, greatly promote the end he had in view, by showing his aptitude and information.[3]

"I shall not disguise," he says at the beginning,

[1] Prince de Ligne.

[2] Frederick would never have an Ambassador sent. "It is an animal too difficult to deal with," he always said. In fact, it was a mere question of economy. Not accepting an Ambassador, he was not obliged to send one.

[3] National archives, T 1527.

" the source whence I have derived the observations and opinions I have brought with me from Prussia. I owe the best of them to that Prince in whom nature, study and experience are combined to make a great man. The esteem and affection he manifests on every opportunity for the King of France, his liking for our nation, the interest he takes in our successes and in our having an army that may be respected, the particular kindness with which he has honoured me, have all enabled me, in the course of a recent stay of two months at his Court, to have several conversations with him on these interesting subjects."

During his stay at the Prussian Court, Lauzun formed a particularly close friendship with Prince Henry, a man of remarkable powers, and well known for his military talents. This Prince took a great liking for the Duc. They had long discussions over the comparative merits of the different armies of Europe ; and the Prince, seeing how deep an interest Lauzun took in such matters, advised him to study the Prussian army very thoroughly.

Lauzun followed his advice; in a short time, thanks to several interviews with the Prince, and the counsels of an aide-de-camp who was desired to assist him in his inquiries, he had drawn up a luminous *Mémoire* on the Prussian army, its complete organization, training, promotion, recruiting, etc.[1] This paper was addressed to M. de Muy, Minister of War.

The capital of Prussia was far from offering the

[1] National archives, T 1527.

resources, from the point of view of fashionable life, which he was prepared to expect. Social intercourse was devoid of all charm, and had no resemblance whatever to the brilliant life of Versailles and Paris. "There are very few entertainments; hardly three houses are thrown open to society. The Ministers of State, whose stipends are very meagre, only give four or five dinners in the year. Only the foreign Ministers have supper parties three or four times a week."

The habits of the fashionable world are strange enough. Evening parties begin at six in the afternoon, and as soon as you are in the room the master of the house hands you a card and makes you sit down to play. The games are Manille, Whist, Hombre, or Reversi.

"As soon as supper is served the cards are laid down, and then it is most amusing to see the people contriving to get placed by the side of those they like. It must be observed that every *liaison* is known, and that the master of the house would have a quarrel on his hands every day if he were not careful to put those to play together who are known to suit each other. As soon as the double doors are thrown open, each man quietly makes his way towards the lady of his choice, near enough to give her his hand. All these delightful couples sit down for themselves alone, so that the unhappy stranger near them is left to drink and eat in silence, without a hope of saying anything on either hand. The master of the house would not be endured if he neglected this rigorous code of laws.

"Fortunes in general are very moderate, but there is a great love of display, and every one wants to make a figure in spite of a modest income. To save for a supper to be given a month hence they will go without supper the thirty intervening days, or at any rate supper will consist only of a slice of bread and butter with thin morsels of cold roast meat. A happy expedient has been hit upon, which is to send out ceremonious invitations to a '*café coëffé*;' that is to say, you are expected to arrive in full dress. After coffee, served with a few little cakes, cards are played, and at about eight o'clock everyone goes home to eat his bread and butter."

There are several theatres at Berlin, but they are not very enjoyable. Everything is on official lines, and the real public go to them but little. The King, who does not choose that his actors should perform to empty benches, orders men out to the play as he does to the parade ground. "There are ridottos and masked balls at the opera, but they too have no great charm, especially when the official circles are commanded to attend and one has to sup with the Court. These suppers are served amid the greatest confusion. Only the King's table and that of Prince Henry are respected. As soon as we rise from table the disorder is at its height. All the servants, like so many birds of prey, rush at the tables, hardly giving us time to leave; and if one is not careful to get away immediately there is some risk of finding oneself among the combatants, and being covered with splashings from the dishes which they all snatch

at and struggle for. What is most horrible is that even the pages behave like the footmen, and are not content with rushing at the dishes and bottles ; they eat with avidity what is left on the plates, and pouring from one glass into another, drink the leavings of a dozen persons." [1]

During his stay at Berlin, Lauzun formed a friendship with two persons—Mr. Harris (afterwards Lord Malmesbury), the English Minister, an amiable man with whom he almost constantly lived ; and Mlle. von Hatzfeldt, maid of honour to the Queen of Prussia, who showed him a very kindly interest. She and Lauzun became great friends ; they were mutually confidential, but things went no further. However, they were somewhat talked about at Berlin, and kind friends warned the Princess Czartoriska that she was deserted. Till now the Princess had kept up a very regular correspondence with Lauzun, and though she had not yet invited him to go to her again, she at any rate allowed him to hope that the moment was near when he might return without arousing Prince Adam's susceptibility.

The news of the Duc's intimacy with Mlle. von Hatzfeldt exasperated the Princess ; she believed that her lover was false, and wrote to him very severely to say that she knew all, that nothing would induce her to see him in Poland again, and that all was at end between them. Lauzun, in despair, did not

[1] These amusing details are derived from a Memoir of the Chevalier de Gaussen, published by M. Frédéric Masson, in the "*Revue d'Histoire Diplomatique.*"

know what course to adopt. Now he would be off to Warsaw to exculpate himself, but the fear of compromising the Princess withheld him; and again he determined to throw up all his schemes and return to France. He was living in the most wretched uncertainty when an unexpected event relieved him from his difficulties.

An old French officer came to call upon him, a M. de Rullecour, who some years since had entered the Polish service. This gentleman mysteriously handed to Lauzun a letter from Prince Adam, desiring him in urgent terms to come and spend twenty-four hours at Warsaw to discuss political matters of the highest importance. This pressing invitation, which Lauzun could not refuse, put an end to his dilemma; he set out the same evening.

We may well be surprised at finding Prince Adam himself calling Lauzun to Warsaw, without any regard for the dangers in which the Duc's presence might involve his honour. The fact was that the Prince, who was eaten up with ambition, believed that the support of France and Russia might be invaluable to him. He fancied that Lauzun enjoyed considerable influence at the Court of Versailles, and he did not hesitate to stifle his jealousy and his fears in favour of his ambitious views.

Prince Adam had just come into the fortunes left by his uncle and his father; all the wealth, power, and credit of the illustrious house of Czartoriski had passed into his hands. The Prince, "a man of no weight, frivolous, incoherent in his ideas, without

ballast and inconsequent," was secretly jealous of the King who had supplanted him on the throne, and he aspired to turn him out. There were at that time two parties in Poland. First, that of the King, which intended to place Count Rzewuski, his nephew, on the throne. Second, that of Prince Adam, associated, in case the crown should become vacant, with the Grand-General Branecki. These two parties, judiciously fostered and fomented, left Russia the absolute mistress of the situation.

On the journey from Berlin to Warsaw, Lauzun was exposed to the most fearful cold; he was in an open carriage, but the schemes that agitated his mind prevented his thinking of the peril to which he was exposed. He reached Warsaw at the end of January, 1775, and alighted at M. de Rullecour's house, where he was concealed from all eyes.

During the night immediately after his arrival Lauzun had a visit from Prince Adam. The Prince told him that his papers on the affairs of Russia and Poland had made the most favourable impression on the Empress, and that the happiest consequences might ensue. If only France would consent and help, Poland might be restored to a great part of the life and liberty she had lost. Lauzun judiciously remarked to the Prince that he knew nothing of M. de Vergennes' views, that he himself had no power, and that his writings contained simply his own personal ideas, which it might be hoped would triumph one day or another. But the Prince was full of enthusiasm and zeal. He impressed on

Lauzun that the situation was critical, and that there was not a moment to be lost. He insisted that Lauzun should immediately see M. de Stackelberg, who was in the most favourable frame of mind. The Duc yielded, and it was agreed that the Russian minister should come the following night to discuss the serious matters at stake.

M. de Stackelberg spent almost the whole night with Lauzun and Prince Adam; they discussed at great length the questions that interested them so passionately. They were able finally to agree, and it was decided that while M. de Stackelberg should write to the Empress at Moscow to submit to her their new schemes, Lauzun, on his part, should send a long report to M. de Vergennes, to inform him of the state of affairs, and ask his consent and power to act. This was at once done.[1]

While awaiting the return of the couriers, sent off in great haste to Versailles and to Moscow, Lauzun saw no use in remaining in concealment, and was presented at Court; it was the best, and certainly the easiest way of meeting with the Princess Czartoriska. The King granted him a private audience, and loaded him with distinctions. All the nobility laid themselves out to please the agreeable and witty Frenchman.

But he little cared for the civilities of the Polish nobility; what he wanted above all was to see the Princess again, and have the explanation he so much wished for, which must end in a rupture or a recon-

[1] National archives, T 1527.

ciliation. Mme. Czartoriska was in the country. As soon as she returned Lauzun hastened to call on her, to clear himself of the crime of which he was falsely accused. He succeeded in seeing her, but not without difficulty, and he had all the trouble in the world to persuade her of his innocence. He was obliged to burn before her eyes the portrait of Mlle. von Hatzfeldt and her letters, to promise not to write to her, and so on. By these sacrifices he won forgiveness. "Mlle. de Hatzfeldt," he writes, "is the only woman I ever treated with discourtesy, which she certainly did not deserve; and I have often and severely blamed myself."

But the reconciliation so ardently desired by Lauzun did not restore to him the calm and happy life he had hoped for. The Princess was obliged to be diplomatically prudent; a thousand precautions were necessary to enable her to see him, and she henceforth, as she told him, regarded him only as a brother. Moreover, a new adorer had joined the train of her admirers. Count Branecki, Grand-General to the King, expressed ardent sentiments, and though she treated him but badly, Lauzun found this vexatious. He had all the more reason for uneasiness, because Prince Adam had made the Grand-General his greatest friend, and constantly invited him to his house. Branecki was supposed to be in high favour with the Empress, and the Prince counted on his support to help him up the steps to the throne; his ambitious views completely blinded him and prevented his discerning Branecki's passion,

which was flagrant to every onlooker. Indeed, the General made no secret of it, and committed some fresh extravagance every day.

Lauzun was exasperated by this intimacy; for besides the fact that it interfered with his seeing the Princess as often as he wished, he foresaw its dangers. But it was not his business to speak of it to her husband; he satisfied himself by hating Branecki, who reciprocated the feeling with interest.

And at any rate he need not be bored in a town where everybody fêted him, and where he found life easy and delightful.

"Who," writes the Prince de Ligne, "would not love Poland, the Poles, and especially the Polish women? The wit and bravery of the men, the grace and beauty of the women, who all, even the least attractive, have an ease of manner, an elegance, piquancy, and charm, superior to the women of any other country.

"Who would not prefer Warsaw to other capitals —Warsaw, where the best French tone prevails, united to an oriental style, the taste of Europe and Asia combined, the urbanity and polish of the most civilized countries, the hospitality of the uncivilized?

"Who does not admire the nation where gentle or simple manners, politeness or frankness are to be met with—lightness and grace in conversation, good education, every kind of accomplishment, liberality, splendid entertainment, a taste for expenditure and the fine arts, luxury, gallantry, extraordinary

customs, magnificence, easy intercourse, kindness, delicate feeling, and gratitude?"

Lauzun appreciated all these delightful qualities; and, if he had not had to complain of the Princess's caprices, would have led the happiest life possible. Believing that a little jealousy would restore his pleasant intimacy with Mme. Czartoriska, Lauzun set up a small flirtation with a young Countess Potocka, who seemed to be ready to take him into favour. The Princess overheard a compromising conversation at a *bal masqué*, which resulted in her closing her door to the Duc next day. Lauzun, to whom the affair had been but a jest, thought he was for ever discarded; he was in the depths of despair, had an attack of fever, grew delirious, and recovered his wits to find the Princess herself at his bedside, bathing him with tears and vowing eternal devotion.

But, in spite of such violent reactions, these transient crises and frequent quarrels were symptoms of the end of a passion, only too plain to such experienced hearts. Count Branecki, meanwhile, was ferociously jealous of Lauzun; to such a point, indeed, that the Duc was warned that he was in possible danger of assassination.

One evening, at the Opera, Branecki was so quarrelsome that, to put an end to the affair, Lauzun challenged him to a meeting next morning on the plain of Vola. This was the usual scene of such duels, which were held in honour at the Polish Court. Branecki accepted. But the King inter-

fered; he desired the Grand-General to make a public apology to his adversary, and a reconciliation was effected.

At this juncture the couriers from the Empress and M. de Vergennes returned.

The Empress accepted the propositions made to her, and gave Lauzun ample powers. She could make no "ministerial overtures," but she authorized him to inform M. de Vergennes of her private intentions, and to transmit to her those of the French Court. Vergennes requested Lauzun to come to Versailles immediately, to hold a conference with him.

The business was of the highest importance and would admit of no delay; Lauzun's presence at home was also necessary for the prosecution of a lawsuit, involving the possession of considerable sums of money;[1] but the bad roads, the flooded rivers, the difficulty of procuring horses during the carnival, and the inconvenience of the lodgings on the way, delayed him till the beginning of Lent.

His parting with the Princess was a touching one; they promised to meet again ere long, and for the thousandth time swore eternal fidelity. But, in spite of all, a mysterious voice warned Lauzun that he would never, never again see the woman he had so devotedly loved.

[1] He lost by this lawsuit and its consequences eighty thousand francs a year.

CHAPTER III.

1775.

The Court in 1775—The King—The Queen—The Queen's friends: the Princesse de Lamballe, Mme. Dillon, the Princesse de Guéménée—The Royal Family.

Before proceeding with our narrative it is indispensable to show in a rapid sketch who were at this time the principal personages at the French Court, and what the society was in which Lauzun now found himself.

Almost all the Court of Louis XV. had disappeared; some were dead, others had withdrawn from Court life. Many had been politely dismissed —*remerciés*—*thanked*, as the phrase was. A whole new circle now surrounds us, with which we must make acquaintance.

First the King and Queen.

The accession of Louis XVI. had given birth to high hopes; the future, alas! gave them the lie. "We saw a young prince mount the throne," writes Ségur, "who had already made himself known by his kindness of heart, sound judgment, and simple manners. He seemed to have no passion but that

for doing his duty and making his subjects happy. He hated pomp, luxury, flattery and pride; it might have been said that Heaven had made this King, not for the courtiers, but for his people." This portrait is somewhat flattered. What is strictly true is that the King was kind and virtuous, irreproachably upright and full of the best intentions. But though he seemed to have all the virtues, he had none of their graces. He was not popular with the Court, and little known to his people.

If only his kindness of heart is taken into account, he was an excellent man, but his kindness degenerated into weakness. He was afflicted with shyness so excessive that he could never overcome it, which sometimes gave occasion to a misapprehension of his intentions. Often, and without the slightest ill-feeling, he would go up to a gentleman, obliging him to step backwards till he was against the wall, and if no words occurred to him, which frequently was the case, instead of speaking he would burst into a loud laugh, turn on his heel and walk off.

His mind was slow and clumsy; he had no taste for intellectual exercises, and on various occasions the coarseness of his pleasantries betrayed the vulgarity of his mind. In a former volume [1] an account was given of the ceremonial of the King's *coucher*. This ceremony became a scene of real distress to all who were sincerely attached to Louis XVI.

The King's coat, waistcoat, and finally his shirt

[1] *The Duc de Lauzun and the Court of Louis XV.*, Chap. v.

were taken off; he was naked to the waist, and would rub himself as though he were alone, in the presence of all his gentlemen and often of several strangers of distinction. Then, when some gentleman he was familiar with was about to put on his night-shirt, he thought it funny to play all sorts of tricks: he would dodge it, slip through it, or even run away, laughing loudly all the time.

As soon as it was on he put on his dressing-gown. Three valets unbuckled the waist band and knee bands of his breeches, which tumbled about his feet. In this costume, and dragging the breeches at his heels, the King would make his round of the circle of courtiers. It was a really pitiable spectacle, but the bystanders of course did not betray their feelings.

At other times he would toss his blue riband in a gentleman's face, or affect to get caught by the earrings of any one who, like the Prince de Ligne, happened to wear them. The Duc de Laval one evening was so much disgusted that he boldly withdrew: "Do not be alarmed, Monsieur," cried the King, "it has nothing to do with you." And nothing more came of it.

His sports were always rough and violent: he would wrestle with certain favourites at Court, such as M. de Conflans, the Coignys, and others; he even fought them pretty hard; one day he almost strangled the Prince de Ligne. It was not malignity, but the need for violent exercise.

It was sheer waste of pains to try to elevate his

mind by interesting conversation. Nothing was to be got out of him but nonsense or sporting talk. M. de Créqui said one day to the Prince de Ligne, "Do you know what these three brothers are?—A burly locksmith; a provincial café wit; and a boulevard popinjay."

His passion for violent exercise was carried to excess. He hunted till he was perfectly exhausted, and came home in lamentable disorder; the gentlemen of his suite could not keep up with him. At meals he ate grossly. This is the programme of a morning: At six o'clock the King rings and asks what there is for breakfast. "A fat fowl, Sir, and cutlets."—"That is not much; I will have eggs with gravy." He himself superintends the preparations, eats four cutlets, the fowl, six eggs *au jus*, and a slice of ham, drinking a bottle and a half of champagne; he then dresses, goes out hunting, and comes in with an incredible appetite for dinner.

These details, emphasized here as bearing on the events which are to be narrated, in no way detracted from the King's moral qualities; his defects were excusable, both by the bad education he had received and by his extreme youth; for it must not be forgotten that in 1774 he was but twenty years of age.

This, in brief outline, was the King. Now let us see what Marie Antoinette was, and how the couple got on together.

It is very difficult to speak freely of this unhappy woman; her terrible martyrdom imposes silence. It

seems to us, however, that after the lapse of a century it is not impossible to tell what seems to be the truth, and that, while exercising all the reserve and respect due to such unequalled misfortunes, the Queen and the part she played may be spoken of frankly without giving rise to bitter recrimination. In the first place, and unhesitatingly, it must be said Marie Antoinette was virtuous in the sense nowadays given to the word. She was guilty only of levity, recklessness, and imprudence—of a serious character, it is true. But had she not every excuse? Who, in her place, would have done better?

Because she came to a tragical end it has been the fashion to crown her with a halo of immaculate virtue. But is not the halo of martyrdom, of the most cruel sorrow that any human being can be called upon to endure, glory enough? Was not the unspeakable agony which lasted from August 10, 1792, till October 16, 1793, enough to expiate the follies which were the stamp of her time? For it comes to that: we must study the situation as it was, the atmosphere and environment in which the Queen lived.

The manners, which have been fully described in the former volume as prevailing during the later years of Louis XVth's reign, had not changed; a very secondary importance still attached to moral *weaknesses;* they were mere peccadilloes, and we shall see among the Queen's immediate friends women of the highest rank conducting themselves with perfect independence of morality and absolute freedom of behaviour.

Though the Queen was indiscreet, had she not excuses? All the ladies of the Court, all her personal friends, were superior to prejudice; most of them had a lover, and made no secret of it. How should her sovereign rank preserve her from the manners in vogue? Could a husband, who for seven years persistently neglected her? A weak and narrow-minded man—to such a point, indeed, that one day in bitter frankness she could not help exclaiming "That poor man!"

Surrounded as she was by the most fascinating and witty young men, this wife of eighteen must have been devoid of heart, soul, and intelligence not to feel the King's obvious inferiority, not to seek to cheat, by transient and platonic attachments, the solitude and melancholy that preyed upon her. This was the secret of all her follies, of her reckless dissipation, of her impassioned friendships. She tried to forget the void in her heart, but without success.

When Marie Antoinette came to Paris she was but fourteen and a half. She was still no more than a child, idle and pleasure-loving; her education had been much neglected.

Maria Theresa, who knew her daughter well, thought her kind, generous, compassionate, gifted with natural graces, and anxious to please; but she was well aware of the defects of her education and the faults of her character. She sent her to France under the gravest apprehension. The Court of Versailles, frivolous and of evil repute, gave her no sense of confidence, and she lavished on the young

Dauphiness the wisest and tenderest advice: "A wife must in all things be subject to her husband," she told her, "and ought to think of nothing but him, to please him and fulfil his will. True happiness in this world is to be found in a happy marriage; I speak from experience. Everything depends on the wife; she must be obliging, gentle, and amusing." (May 4, 1770.)

Mercy, too, tried to put the Dauphiness on her guard against the snares laid for her feet, and to guide her inexperience. He advised her, among other things, to converse with the persons of distinction who might visit the Court: "It is an infallible way of giving pleasure," he told her, "and it will be all the more appreciated because it will be a new style of conduct at this Court, where the Royal Family are apt to receive but ill those who are brought into contact with them."

Marie Antoinette's position became at once peculiarly delicate, and to get over such difficulties the young wife would have needed wisdom far beyond her years. Not to mention the intrigues of a Court which from the day of her arrival was in constant agitation to get possession of her mind, the Dauphin left her strangely to herself. The Prince's good-nature did not prevent his being afflicted with a gloomy temper and almost ridiculous timidity. He thought his wife charming, but persisted in never showing her that he thought so. A coldness so insulting to a young, lovely and attractive woman, gave rise to a state of feeling between the pair which

was every day more intolerable, and which might easily lead to very annoying comments. Marie Antoinette at first did not seem to remark it much; but by degrees it was evidently the cause of strange fits of dejection.

The Dauphin's unaccountable coolness led at last to a somewhat lively scene between the Royal couple, reported to Maria Theresa by her correspondent Mercy. But it was more than seven years before he could make up his mind to break through his incomprehensible and insulting reserve. The situation was a painful one for the young wife. The Empress Maria Theresa was very uneasy about it, and wrote very judiciously to Mercy: "The more extraordinary is the Dauphin's coldness, the more circumspect must my daughter's conduct be." (June, 1771.)

The Dauphin, as we have seen, did not redeem the singularity of his demeanour by elegance of manner or charm of wit. He had nothing of a nature to attract and please a young wife. We know his tastes and mode of life. He was constantly ill from indigestion brought on by some excess in eating cakes or pastry. What a treat, indeed, for a young woman full of grace and fascination, must a husband have been, platonic in his regard, caring for nothing but hunting and feeding, and claiming her attentions only for revolting indispositions! The broad witticism of the Prince de Ligne is very intelligible when he said that "Marie Antoinette had married perhaps the worthiest

man in the kingdom, but certainly not the most appetizing." [1]

The Queen on the other hand was in all the brilliancy of youth; her beauty was radiant. Walpole, who saw her in 1775 at the Court ball in honour of the marriage of Madame Clotilde (her sister-in-law), wrote, "It was impossible to see anything but the Queen; Hebes and Floras, Helens and Graces are street-walkers to her. She is a statue of beauty when sitting or standing; grace itself when she moves." (To the Countess of Ossory, Aug. 23, 1775.)

Marie Antoinette on the throne was still what she had been as Dauphiness, and years, while modifying what remained child-like in her manner, did not sensibly alter her character.

She had no great breadth of mind, but her apprehension was quick. The lightness of her nature led her to avoid serious discourse; she was amused by trifles, the tittle-tattle and scandal of the day. She had by nature a marked disposition for mockery; to flatter her taste, those about her tried to entertain her at the expense of others, and she thus made many enemies. Even in the early days of her reign an impertinent ballad was circulated at Court,—

> "Little queen of twenty years
> Setting people by the ears,
> You will be sent home again."

In spite of a mania for pleasure and much levity and heedlessness, she was genuinely kind-hearted, and had an eager desire to serve those who applied to her

[1] "Certes pas le plus ragoutant."

for help. Nature had lavished on her graces which were enchanting when she chose to exert them ; no one could be more captivating, her manners and speech were amiable and engaging ; but she hated etiquette, and ceremonial wearied her. She loved private life and an intimate circle.

In her domestic relations she was very amiable ; she spent her life in patching up the squabbles which were constantly breaking out between these or those. As to the pleasures of familiarity or affection, she enjoyed few from her own family, and yet her heart was always craving for friendship. This was the reason that she formed certain intimacies for which she was afterwards severely blamed. However, "female friendships" were the fashion of the time ; every woman had her bosom friend : "They raise altars to Friendship, they recite hymns to Friendship. The portrait of the beloved friend is worn under a bracelet ; they talk of nothing but the joys of friendship. This display of sentimentality dates from the same period as Jockeys." (*Tableau de Paris.*)

The Queen's first great friend was the Princesse de Lamballe. She led the series of those favourites who so scandalously abused their mistress's generosity. Marie Antoinette had remarked her at the balls given every winter during the carnival by Mme. de Noailles, to which few persons were invited but the Royal Family and some intimate friends. At that time she was still Dauphiness, and lived at Court in absolute isolation. Mme. de Lamballe, young, gentle, and amiable, pleased her well ; she

held long conversations with her, and they soon became exceedingly intimate.

"Mme. de Lamballe was extremely pretty, and though her figure was devoid of elegance, and she had hideous hands, which, by their size, contrasted strangely with the delicacy of her features, she was charming without regular beauty; her temper was gentle, obliging, equable and cheerful, but she was absolutely devoid of wit; her vivacity, sprightliness, and childlike air very agreeably concealed her want of brains; she had never had an opinion of her own, but in conversation she always adopted the views of the person who was supposed to be the cleverest." (Mme. de Genlis.)

She had a great many little manias; she fainted at the sight of a bunch of violets, as of a lobster or a shrimp; she would shut her eyes and remain motionless for half an hour in spite of all that could be done for her—though no one believed in these affected fainting fits. And subsequently, when periodical attacks of the nerves followed by unconsciousness had become the fashion, Mme. de Lamballe never failed to have them twice a week, on the same days and at the same hour, for a whole year.

The Queen wished to give her friend a handsome appointment. There had been no Court Superintendent (Surintendante) since Mlle. de Clermont. The place was revived for Mme. de Lamballe, with a salary of two hundred thousand francs. She frequently received the Queen at supper and card parties. But the Princess did not long remain in

her post. Marie Antoinette could not fail to discover her lack of intelligence, and was worried by the perpetual quarrels the Princess stirred up on every pretext with the ladies-in-waiting. It was easy to foresee that Mme. de Lamballe's reign would be brief.

However, as long as Mme. de Noailles' balls were given, that is to say, till the death of Louis XV., no one but Mme. de Lamballe seemed to be honoured with Marie Antoinette's friendship. After the King's death Mme. de Noailles' balls came to an end, and during the winter of 1774-5 their place was filled by balls given by the Queen, to which everyone in any way attached to the Court was invited.

It was at these parties that Marie Antoinette distinguished by her notice Mme. Dillon, the Archbishop of Narbonne's niece, of whom we have already spoken at some length, and whom Lauzun had long admired.

Mme. Dillon had been faithful in her attachment to the Prince de Guéménée, with whom she was extremely intimate. This *liaison*, which was recognized and condoned, in no way hindered the Queen from making friends with this lady; and in order to bring her within her circle and admit her to the palace as one of her ladies, Mme. de Lamballe was neglected and had only the superficial rights of intimacy.

Mme. Dillon was charming, but her mother, Mme. de Rothe,[1] was considered intriguing, and she was ere long accused of speculating on the favour shown

[1] Sometimes written Roothe.

to her daughter. This rumour, mischievously spread, was to the discredit of the new favourite. Notwithstanding her intimacy with the Prince de Guéménée, Mme. Dillon was on the best terms with his wife, at which no one need be astonished, given the code of manners that we know prevailed. Mme. de Guéménée, so haughty a fine lady as she was, frequently visited Hautefontaine to see her friend. "It was the result of the urbanity of manners which made the wife always particularly attentive to the lady of her husband's preference."

At Mme. Dillon's the Queen frequently met Mme. de Guéménée, and conceived for the Princess a very warm liking. The Princess, having inherited from her aunt, Mme. de Marsan, the office of governess to the Royal children, held one of the highest positions at Court; and although it was a sinecure till 1778, she enjoyed all the same its privileges and emoluments.

She was a very singular woman; very clever, but employing her cleverness in plunging into the follies of the *illuminés*. She was always surrounded by a number of dogs, to which she addressed a sort of worship, declaring that through them she held communion with mediatory spirits. In the midst of a conversation in which she shone by her wit and judgment, she would suddenly stop short and fall into a trance.

She lived at Court in great state; in her rooms all Choiseul's partisans were wont to meet. In the winter, in her rooms at the Tuileries, she gave delightful

parties where all persons of any pretensions found themselves together. She had a little theatre built, where the best actors of the three play-houses then existing came to act. These performances were generally preceded by a concert, followed by a splendid supper and a kind of *café*. These entertainments were the wonder of Paris, but they gradually led to the financial crash of which we shall presently have occasion to speak.

Mme. de Guéménée did not make herself singular by affecting a virtue which was quite too dowdy; her recognized lover was the Duc de Coigny. Her circle was on the whole one of much freedom, and when the passion for gambling had seized the Court, play at her house was a perfect frenzy.

She was too great a lady to accept the part of favourite; she treated the Queen as her equal. Marie Antoinette was her constant visitor, and gave her every mark of the greatest regard.

As to the Royal Family, the Queen found in them but a small resource.

Monsieur, though clever, well informed, and gifted with a good memory, betrayed great ambitions; his uncertain temper made him a person to be feared rather than loved.

The Comte D'Artois, the Benjamin of the family, was scatter-brained, elegant, and good looking; he had all the tastes and all the faults of the youth of his time, but his levity and excesses made him a compromising companion; he heaped folly on folly; he it was who for a long time undertook to organize his sister-in-

law's amusements, and he did it with so little moderation and tact as to give rise to much scandal.

Madame, Monsieur's wife,[1] did not lack intelligence nor a certain grace of manner, though she was so ugly. Monsieur had lived with her on very good terms for some years; but having attached himself to Mme. de Balbi, he neglected her completely. Her sister, the Comtesse d'Artois, was even uglier; she was moreover silly, sulky and ungracious. Her husband, whose life was altogether disreputable, left her entirely to herself.

The little Court held by Mesdames was quite apart; it was known as the Old Court. It was extremely regular and monotonous. The Princesses spent the summer at Bellevue, where their nephews and nieces often came to offer to dine with them.

Mesdames, and especially Madame Adélaide, had great influence over the King; they tried to extend it to the Queen, and did their utmost to circumvent her and use her power to their own advantage.

[1] She was a princess of Savoy, Vol. I. p. 274.

CHAPTER IV.

1775.

Lauzun arrives at Versailles—An interview with M. de Vergennes—Intimacy with Mme. Dillon and Mme. de Guéménée—The Queen receives him kindly—Correspondence with M. de Stackelberg—Corn riots—Lauzun goes to Sarreguemines—The Coronation—Check to the negotiations with M. de Vergennes—Rupture with Princess Czartoriska—Residence at Sarreguemines—Journey through the Palatinate.

When Lauzun arrived at Versailles, in the early days of March, 1775, all was calm in the political world; no storms threatened, and the augurs of the Court foretold a long course of peaceful times. The golden age had returned.

"All is quiet here," writes Mme. du Deffant. "No visible intrigues are being plotted; a love of the public good is loudly professed. Maurepas possesses in peace the foremost popularity; the only person who would dispute it (the Queen) and snatch it from him, is taken up with balls, head-dresses, feathers, and the like. Turgot professes virtue; he wants to set up the reign of liberty, establish equality, and practise humanity. It is the reign of philosophy."

It might be supposed that Lauzun's first care, on stepping out of his post-chaise, would be to go to M. de Vergennes, and lay before him the important mission with which he was charged. Nothing of the kind. No sooner had he arrived than he was told that some horse-races were to be seen next day, on the Plaine de Sablons. What a fine opportunity for showing himself to the world of Paris and announcing his return. On no account would he miss it. These races, almost the first that had been held in France, were an occasion of great ceremony, and brought together a considerable concourse. The King, the Queen, the Ducs de Chartres and de Bourbon were present. A grand stand had been erected for the Royal Family, allowing them to look over the crowd and watch the course. Heavy bets were laid.[1]

Lauzun won the prize and was loudly applauded by the crowd.

This important duty accomplished, he happily remembered that he was an envoy, and presented himself before the Minister for Foreign Affairs. M. de Vergennes received him well, and they held long

[1] The first race was run in France, February 28, 1766. This novelty was started on the Plaine de Sablons, at Neuilly, a place wonderfully well fitted for this kind of sport. Lauraguais rode one of his own horses. His opponent was Lord Forbes. All Paris was afoot by nine in the morning; the carriages and crowd thronged to see such a new sight. Lauraguais was beaten. This race, luckless for the French champion, gave rise to endless quarrels. Lauraguais' horse died a few days after, and the surgeons who dissected it declared that it had been poisoned. The English were of course suspected, and this produced a violent ill-feeling against them. Another race was to have been run between the Prince of Nassau and Mr. Forth: the King forbade it, to avoid a repetition of such scandals.

conferences on the subject of Catherine's proposals. Lauzun explained to the Minister all he had not been able to say by letter. He emphasized the Empress's desire for a prompt decision, and the necessity for the absolute secrecy to be observed with regard to the negotiations; she would receive no envoy unless he came as a private traveller, in no official character. Lauzun, very naturally, thought that, having had the merit of opening the negotiation, he would be allowed the glory of bringing it to an issue.

M. de Vergennes, unfortunately, displayed little enthusiasm: he seemed to distrust the Empress's good faith and the sincerity of her purpose. Lauzun, on his part, did not know her well enough to dare to answer for her honesty; but he pointed out to the Minister that she would find sincerity too greatly to her advantage to think of deceiving the French. The truth was that M. de Vergennes had a friend, M. de Juniez, whom he meant to send as Ambassador to Russia, and he preferred to leave the negotiations to him.

While these parleys with the Minister were going on, Lauzun resumed his life of fashion. He was on intimate terms with Mme. Dillon and Mme. de Guéménée. He renewed his familiar friendship with them immediately on his return, and naturally he met the Queen almost every evening in the rooms of her new favourites. His reputation for agreeableness and wit, and his various adventures, were too well known for Marie Antoinette not to have heard

of them ; they had indeed aroused her curiosity, and had been the subject of conversation with Mme. de Guéménée. She received Lauzun very graciously. He was himself at his best, that is to say, clever, amiable, charming, full of life and gaiety. He pleased the Queen, who, finding his society amusing and agreeable, invited him to appear often at Court.

In a short while he was, in a way, a favourite ; constantly invited to the private parties at Versailles, and riding out with Marie Antoinette almost every day in the woods of Boulogne (the Bois de Boulogne) and Verrières. These rides, when the Queen was always accompanied by a lady-in-waiting and her equerries, could give no umbrage to public opinion ; but the Sovereign, who could not endure a bore, sometimes rode ahead with a single companion, the most agreeable man of the party, leaving her suite to follow. This heedless behaviour led to severe strictures.

Lauzun's promotion to favour gave rise to much jealousy. He did not trouble himself about it, and gaily led the pleasant life he had taken up since his return to Paris. He did not, however, neglect the serious business incumbent on him. He kept up a brisk correspondence with M. de Stackelberg, from which we shall give some extracts. Politics and love affairs are pleasantly mixed up in these letters.

Lauzun was not quite at ease with regard to the Princess Czartoriska ; Count Branecki disturbed

him greatly; Prince Repnine, too, had arrived at Warsaw, and his presence was an annoyance to Lauzun, for he aspired to his former pre-eminence. Stackelberg had warned Lauzun that Repnine had shown much temper on hearing of his rival's visit to Poland.

Lauzun replies:—[1]

"I am not surprised at the effect my visit produced on Repnine; he hates me, and has reason. It is quite natural that he should have been uneasy at finding me in a place whither he hoped I never should come again. I am not surprised that Princess Czartoriska should have explained that she had nothing to do with my journey (to Warsaw). It is the truth. She was not justifying herself to him for allowing me to go; she only wished to prove that she had not deceived him when she said I was not going there. . . . Prince Repnine's influence is at an end. . . . I am not afraid of him, but it is important for other reasons to keep him away from the place where she is, and above all to hinder his having any employment of whatever kind to keep him there. Means must be found to give

[1] All these letters are part of a correspondence in cypher, preserved in the National Archives. I have succeeded in finding the key to the cypher. These letters are a fresh and indisputable proof of the genuineness of Lauzun's "Memoirs;" in fact, in the original MS. from which the copies were made for the first edition of the "Memoirs," Lauzun always wrote Gzartoryska for Czartoriska, and this spelling was retained in the first edition. Now, in the autograph letters in the Archives, we find the same spelling, G for C. In them we also have complete confirmation of all the facts recorded in the "Memoirs" relating to Lauzun's connection with the Princess. Who else could have been so well informed?

the Princess courage to forbid his remaining, and my presence alone can give her such courage."

Lauzun and Stackelberg were both guided by secret motives, in following up their political views; the former wanted to go to Warsaw; the latter, to come to Paris; each was anxious to live near a woman whom he passionately loved.

Lauzun states the position very clearly when he writes to Stackelberg: "Our fate is similar: we have the same results to fear, and our alliance may give us the means of averting them. You can combine a legitimate ambition with the sentiment that fills your heart. When once our Courts are allied nothing can be easier than for the Princess Radzivil to come to France for some years. This will add to the attractions you will find in the country you know so well, and where you will have the most agreeable and distinguished post in Europe. My views are less lofty. If I am but employed for the nonce at St. Petersburg, in a way useful to Russia and France; if I should continue there afterwards for life, with the consent and under the protection of H.M. the Empress, I shall spend my life with those I love and be perfectly happy."

Lauzun was not quite easy as to his really extraordinary position with regard to Prince Adam. It is amusing enough to watch the details of the intrigue as related by one of the principal actors :—

"The two main points of the business are to make sure of him and of her. To this end, as I repeat, my presence is indispensable; but it is essential that it

should have a sufficient reason, so as not to scare Prince Czartoriski, and not to lay him open to the bad impressions which our common enemies will certainly endeavour to give him. He must be led to believe that his own interest and that of his country require my presence, and leave the question open till I arrive in Poland, as to whether he shall go to Russia with me. I think you will do well to speak to him frequently of the reciprocal relations of our two Courts, the probable causes which may ally them and lead them to take views favourable to the protection of Poland; you must also show the greatest confidence in all I have undertaken, and in the influence I have through my position: tell him that you hope I may succeed in your country; and it would be well, I think, to enlarge on the advantages to Poland from my expected success in Russia. He will be flattered by your confidence, and you, better than anyone, know the way to make him think just what you please.

"If once he really wishes that I should go, and if you can only keep your eye on him till then, so that no one else can take possession of him, I answer for it that Princess Czartoriska's joy will be as great as mine, and we will manage him absolutely and invariably. You will then have to take some steps with the Empress to secure my being sent to St. Petersburg by my Court, which will be very easy if it should appear that she prefers me to anyone else. You must, however, be careful not to damage the fortunes or the position of M. de Juinez; on the con-

trary, give it out that I could contribute to his being favourably received. This is important, for M. de Juinez is the intimate friend of M. de Vergennes. It would be a great advantage to be found necessary to that man, who, by all appearance, will be a good deal embarrassed in Russia."

At this juncture Lauzun learnt from the Princess that his last visit to Warsaw had had a bad effect on Prince Adam. Ill-disposed persons had tried to provoke the Empress against the Prince. Lauzun hastened to report this to M. de Stackelberg.

"I have just received a letter from Princess Czartoriska which greatly vexes me. It tells me of a shameful trick which I must report to you. She says that some one has made mischief by throwing blame on Prince Czartoriski for my last journey to Poland, and has said so to the Empress; who is disgusted with the Prince's conduct, believing that it was he who sent for me to treat with France without her knowledge; that this has had a disastrous effect on the Prince's prospects, and might have had worse consequences if some honest friends had not succeeded in pacifying the Empress; and finally that the plan for an alliance between our two Courts is regarded in Russia as impossible and of no importance.

"You will at once understand, Monsieur, that such an absurd piece of villainy can only come from M. Branecki. The idea is devoid of all common sense, and can therefore only be his. It is, however, needful to prove what a blunder this piece of spite is;

for, as you know, I saw Prince Czartoriski only by your desire, I said nothing to him but what you dictated, and he meddled with absolutely nothing; still, in spite of its absurdity, you know there is a person in Warsaw on whom this story might make an impression.

"If your Sovereign's religion had been worked upon, it would be quite easy for you to crush the calumny. You have of course given her an account of my system for Poland, and it must have satisfied her. I think I can frighten the authors of this nonsense more than they have frightened me.

"I shall have the honour of sending you a letter for her Majesty by the first safe opportunity. It is to be wished that she may know these reports, and have the goodness to crush them by honouring me with a letter in which Prince Czartoriski should be mentioned in a way to be agreeable to him. You cannot imagine how much easier I should find it to carry out the Empress's orders if I had leave to show the letter to Prince Czartoriski and to M. de Vergennes without her seeming to know of it."

Pending these negotiations, Lauzun carefully watched the intrigues at Court which were hatching round the new Ministers; he thought their position endangered, and at once warned M. de Stackelberg. He wrote him this curious letter, which shows beyond question the influence he already had, or thought he had, with the Queen:—

"I have been meaning to write to you for some time, and if I have delayed it was because I thought

I should have to announce some important changes; they are certainly very near and no longer doubtful. I could positively name the people who will replace those who will go. The Queen can do anything, and I have the greatest influence with her through a person who makes her wish whatever he pleases. The Empress has only to speak; what she asks will be done; she will certainly demand nothing unreasonable, and I answer for it with my head that everything will gladly be done to please her; but for that the Empress must seem to honour me with her entire confidence, and I must be able to show unequivocal proof of it. It would indeed not be amiss that it should be supposed that she wishes to attract me to her service by special advantages. That will not compromise her in any way. I am writing thus confidentially not to the Russian Minister but to M. de Stackelberg, on whose honour and friendship I rely. All I wish for in the world is to be employed in Poland or in Russia. I will stake my life for such happiness, and I believe I never played so high nor made so good a bargain."

Meanwhile, negotiations with M. de Vergennes made no progress. Lauzun, in spite of his urgency, could get no formal reply; the Minister was still suspicious, and claimed such a return as the Empress could not or would not grant.

Further to test the Empress's views, Vergennes thought it necessary to demand in favour of France

[1] Lauzun dares not avow his influence, and imagines the intervention of a third person.

an article dealing with Commerce, and he consequently begged Lauzun to write to M. de Stackelberg.

"Stackelberg," writes Lauzun, "was extremely embarrassed at having to treat on a subject which belonged exclusively to Count Panin, and fearing the rivalry of so powerful a Minister he at once screened himself behind purely ministerial formulas. He would only repeat what he had already said; that the Empress desired that an envoy should be sent, without any official position, to learn her wishes and treat with her; that he very much wished that I should be entrusted with this commission, and that I should certainly have every facility afforded me for carrying it out successfully."

Lauzun again communicated Stackelberg's letters to M. de Vergennes; he also warned him that Count Panin wished to make the Empress sign a treaty with England, and that she refused solely in the hope of concluding the agreement with France which she really had at heart. Still, in spite of his persistency and efforts, he could extract nothing from the Minister but procrastinating replies. At this juncture serious events occurred.

For some little time disturbing symptoms had been apparent among the populace: there had been local riots in some provinces, for which the high price of bread had been the reason or the pretext. The mob had revolted at Beaumont, at Saint-Germain, and at Pontoise, and order had not been restored without bloodshed.

By May the excitement had infected the capital.

The police, forewarned of the plots simmering among the people, told M. de Maurepas that the situation was ominous, and that the troops must be called out without delay if the riots were to be suppressed with promptitude. But the old Minister was going to the opera and postponed all business till the morrow. He was rash, for the threatened riot broke out, and the police, outnumbered, were unable to control it. The mob, excited by the ringleaders, pillaged the bakers' shops as far as to Versailles. They were not content to have bread only, but seized everything that came to hand. At Paris it was the same; it was like a town taken by storm. All the vagabonds and thieves that infested the surrounding country rushed in to clutch their share, as if at the word of command.

It was necessary to take energetic measures if the mob were not to get the upper hand; the troops in Paris and the neighbourhood were placed under the command of Maréchal de Biron. He posted the cannon in batteries on the ramparts by the Seine; numerous companies patrolled the streets; the markets were protected by the French Guards. The Musketeers, and other Royal regiments, traversed the country and high roads all round the capital, stopping tramps and all who could not give an account of themselves. A number of the ringleaders were hanged with much formality, and in a few days order was re-established.

When these Corn riots first broke out the Government had moved up the provincial troops to support

the garrison in Paris. Also, in view of the grave state of affairs, all officers on leave had been ordered to rejoin their regiments.

Lauzun shared the common lot, and made ready to set out for Mouzon, where the Royal Legion was still quartered. As soon as the Queen heard of his imminent departure, she caused proposals to be made to him that he should take advantage of the general movement of the troops to have his regiment transferred to Paris. The Duc expressed his thanks, but refused point blank.

The day before he left he went to Montreuil, to Mme. de Guéménée's, to take leave of her. This lady had just built a magnificent residence on her estate adjoining Versailles, and she liked the place so well that she spent the greater part of the year there. The garden was laid out with remarkable taste; Paris could be seen in the distance from a little knoll reached by a path leading to the top and hidden in a clump of shrubs. Mme. de Guéménée, who had a passion for flowers, cultivated them with success in this delightful spot, of which Delille could say—

"The laughing Graces had designed Montreuil."

On reaching Montreuil, Lauzun found the Queen there. She had come by chance to call, and again eagerly pressed him to remain at Paris. "Do not go yet," said she, "the Corn riots make it necessary to concentrate the regiments; we will have your corps brought up." The Duc again thanked her, but declared that the transfer would be to the disadvantage of his men, and that he would not have it. "You are an

idiot! " said the Queen, laughing. And as the Baron de Vioménil, who was directing the mobilization of the troops, happened to come in, she added: " Baron, make the Royal Legion march out, and bring it near enough so that this foolish fellow need not leave us, as he intends doing."

But Lauzun would listen to nothing. Next day he went out hunting in the forest of Boulogne with the Queen in the morning, and in the evening he set out to join his regiment.

Marie Antoinette, who regretted his departure, had offered to ask the King to command his presence at the Coronation, which was to take place in the course of the month of May. Lauzun knew that the Choiseul faction meant to seize that opportunity to try to return to power ; he foresaw that he would be the subject of endless importunities ; that every one would want to take advantage of his growing influence ; and so, prompted by very honourable feelings of discretion and reserve, he again refused the Queen's offers.

The great occasion of the Coronation seemed to Choiseul's partisans to be a favourable opportunity for renewing the attempts which had so signally failed before, to ingratiate themselves with Louis XVI., and they neglected nothing that might help them to gain their end. Choiseul appeared at Versailles and at Reims ; the courtiers observed his radiant expression ; his cocked nose seemed to wear an assertive and conquering air: this was enough to start a rumour that he was to be recalled to office.

The Queen, indeed, renewed her entreaties, but was not more fortunate than she had been at the old King's death. The King answered sternly: "Never let me hear that man's name!"

Marie Antoinette was tenacious and would not take a beating; she was determined to show at least, by granting him a private audience, that the fallen Minister was in favour at Court; and to achieve her end without risking a prohibition she had recourse to a trick which she herself has left on record. "You will never guess," she writes to Count von Rosenberg, "how cleverly I managed so as not to seem to be asking leave. I told the King that I should like to see M. de Choiseul, that the only difficulty was to name a day. And I did it so well that the poor man himself fixed the most convenient time for me to receive him! I think I made good use of the rights of woman on this occasion. . . . There has been so much talk about this audience that I would not answer for it that old Maurepas has not been afraid to go home to sleep even."

This audience of the Queen did, in fact, make a great noise at Versailles, and Choiseul's adherents, thinking they were about to triumph, fairly screamed for joy. But this imprudent confidence reached Vienna, and gave rise to great scandal there. Maria Theresa was outraged by her daughter's indiscreet levity. The words *poor man* so flippantly applied to the King horrified the Empress. In vain did Mercy try to pacify her, to persuade her that the offensive words *bon homme* had been a mere slip,

that she had misunderstood the full purport of the expression. Maria Theresa was not to be misled; "It was not," she severely replied, "the epithet *good* man, but *poor* man that she applied to her husband. What a style! What a way of thinking! It confirms my fear only too surely. She is hastening to her ruin, happy if even in her fall she preserves the virtues of her rank. If Choiseul becomes Minister she is lost. He will hold her cheaper than he did La Pompadour, to whom he owed everything, and whom he was the first to desert."

The Coronation took place on the appointed day, but Lauzun was not present. Enormous sums were spent on the ceremony. At Soissons one of the city gates was pulled down because the Royal carriage, which was eighteen feet high, could not pass under it. Nothing could be stranger than seeing the high road to Reims as crowded as the Rue Saint-Honoré —twenty thousand post-horses were constantly on the road. All the bridges which the King was to cross were reconstructed. These works were carried out by gangs of peasants on forced labour, to their utter despair. "These hapless creatures," writes a contemporary, "as soon as they see a traveller in the distance, kneel down, lifting their hands to Heaven, and then putting them to their mouths as if asking for bread" (*Bachaumont*). In the church at Reims a complete apartment, with a guard room, was arranged for the Queen.

On his return from Reims, on May 28, the King reviewed the French and Swiss guards. There was

an immense crowd; the high hopes founded on his accession a year ago had vanished; disaffection had begun. He was but little cheered on his way, and when the Queen passed there was an icy silence.

The political changes foretold by Lauzun in his letter to M. de Stackelberg were about to take place. In July M. de la Vrillière retired, and his place was taken by M. de Malesherbes. "Here is our Government in the hands of the philosophers," writes Mme. du Deffant. "This is the reign of virtue, of disinterestedness, of love of the public good, and of liberty." And she adds, with the satisfaction of a holder of Government stock: "They profess great economy and punctuality in paying everything they owe." At the same time instability and uncertainty seemed to be the rule of the new *régime*, and Mme. du Deffant could say, again with good reason: "These are strange times; you may bet on everything, for or against."

Though far enough from Paris, and living at Sarreguemines, whither his regiment had been removed, Lauzun attentively watched all the political incidents happening at Versailles. He was still anxious to obtain from M. de Vergennes the much debated mission to Russia for which he had waited so long. Before leaving Paris he had called on the Minister, but had extracted merely more or less evasive answers. To stimulate his zeal and not suffer it to become dormant, Lauzun had placed his interests in the hands of a friend who kept him regularly informed

of all that was going on at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Paris.[1]

Stackelberg was still most eager, and hoped more than ever to effect the alliance. He urged on Lauzun to hasten the negotiations; but it was in vain that the Duc had the matter pressed on the Minister's attention. M. de Vergennes was always for procrastination. He would not take the preliminary steps, saying that before talking business with Russia her friendship must be won, and so forth.

Then, suddenly, Lauzun learnt that a certain M. de Paige had been secretly despatched to Poland by M. de Vergennes, to study the situation there. Furious at having been thus deceived, Lauzun wrote hotly and indignantly to the Minister, complaining of this unspeakable betrayal. Vergennes, much ashamed at the discovery of his meanness, answered Lauzun in a very civil letter to try to exculpate himself. He explained that Paige had been sent to Russia to negotiate a marriage between the Prince de Lorraine and Prince Adam's young daughter, and defended himself against the charge of having given him any special mission. Lauzun, hurt and offended by M. de Vergennes' conduct, understood that it was vain to persist, and that there was not a chance of his schemes being realized, so for the time at any rate, he gave up the purpose he had so obstinately followed up for the last year.

As misfortunes never come singly, he suffered at

[1] This correspondence, in cypher, exists at the "Archives Nationales;" it is too long to reproduce here.

this time one of the great sorrows of his life. For some months Mme. Czartoriska's letters had been shorter and rarer. He also knew through friends at Warsaw, that Count Branecki's assiduity was greater than ever, and that he seemed to be making rapid progress in her affections. Lauzun, deeply anxious and distressed, wrote letters of resentment, which, as always happens in such cases, were taken very ill. He insisted and got angry, and before long a coldness and tension existed between the lovers, once so tender and devoted, which soon led to a complete rupture. And thus ended most prosaically—like so many similar passions—the eternal loves of Lauzun and the beautiful Princess Czartoriska.

This checkmate in love consoled Lauzun for the checkmate in diplomacy which he had till then so painfully felt. The break with the Princess plunged him in the deepest grief; he loved her with sincere passion; and years later we shall find him trying to effect a reconciliation, which, however, events interfered to prevent. But he was not the man to waste life in barren regrets; he looked about for such amusements as might enable him to forget them. He may indeed be blamed for not remaining longer faithful to the memory of a woman he had loved so well, and running after new loves; all that can be said in excuse is that he wanted to deaden feeling, and that his heart was but little engaged in the transient connections with which he strove to cheat his sadness and *ennui*.

He was quartered at Sarreguemines, close to the little principality of Deux-Ponts (Zwei Brücken),

where there was some society. Among many adventures too commonplace to be mentioned, the most serious was a flirtation with a Baroness Dalberg; but he tired of it ere long, and after a visit to her Castle of Hernsheim in the Palatinate, and an introduction to the Electress, at Ockersheim—where he says the Baroness was pleased to show him off, "as well as a cream-coloured pony with a white mane, sent her from Mecklenburg at the time of my arrival"—he was glad to get back to Sarreguemines, where he found his regiment and rest.

Not long after his return Lauzun received a letter from the Duc de Chartres announcing that a great horse-race was to be run, and pressing Lauzun to come to Paris for the event. The pretext was a good one, and our hero gladly availed himself of it; he was, in fact, beginning to feel the worse for this monotonous and idle life. So he returned to the capital to pursue the brilliant destiny which could not fail to await him there.

CHAPTER V.

1775.

Lauzun returns to Paris—The influenza—Lady Barrymore—Her acquaintance with Lauzun—The Queen's partiality for the Comtesse Jules de Polignac—Mme. de Vaudreuil and de Besenval—The Abbé de Vermond's anxieties.

The famous race, which had been able to excite Lauzun so far as to make him desert his seclusion at Sarreguemines, took place on October 6th, 1775, on the Plaine de Sablons. The competitors were the Comte D'Artois, the Duc de Chartres, Lauzun, and M. de Conflans.

The throng was immense ; all the Court and all the town were present. A stand had been erected on the middle of the course for the Queen, "who was as beautiful as the day—and the day was lovely." The race began at one o'clock and only lasted six minutes, though the distance to be covered was considerable: three times round the course. The struggle was an eager one, and this time again Lauzun was victorious, and his English jockey carried off the prize.

The Queen seemed delighted with the sight; she congratulated Lauzun warmly, and made him introduce the jockey who rode the winning horse; finally she consoled the losers "with infinite grace."

In consequence of this exploit Lauzun's jockey was so much the fashion that Walpole wrote: "The latter won by the address of a little French postillion, who is in such fashion that I don't know whether the Academy will not give him for the subject of an *éloge*."

After this brilliant reappearance in the capital, Lauzun, anxious to forget his misadventures, rushed headlong into fashion and society. He was as intimate as ever with Mme. Dillon and Mme. de Guéménée ; he had the pleasure of finding that he was not forgotten, and of resuming in that brilliant circle the predominant place he had filled at the time of his departure. The Queen treated him with the same confidence, saw him with the same pleasure, and was always ready to take an opportunity of showing him in what high esteem she held him. They frequently rode out together, and met almost every evening in Mme. de Guéménée's rooms. Lauzun, however, made circumspect by the ill-natured reports that had been circulated, behaved with considerable reserve.

Mme. de Guéménée had long been one of his greatest friends, and she sincerely rejoiced at the favour he enjoyed, doing her utmost to show him in the most advantageous light. She constantly sang his praises to the Queen, and in her presence would expatiate on his rare merits, his wit, his loyalty, his delightful and chivalrous character.

Marie Antoinette was sincerely attached to Mme. de Guéménée and had every confidence in her ; she was therefore not insensible to these reiterated

remarks, and her esteem and friendship for Lauzun were steadily increased by them. Nor was it the Queen alone who welcomed Lauzun's society; the whole Royal Family, the King and the Comte d'Artois, were especially friendly with him. He often went out hunting with Louis XVI., who treated him as civilly as his nature would allow. This, then, is a fairly complete picture of the position of our chief personages at the end of the year 1775.

At this period the world of fashion was saddened by one of the most violent epidemics of influenza that ever came to Paris from London; almost every one was attacked with a violent cold in the head, accompanied by severe pains in the head and high fever. The complaint was first known as the *grippe*, and afterwards as *la puce* and *la follette;* finally it was called the Influenza, and it at once became the subject of flippant songs. In spite of being laughed at, it killed a great many people, and the hospitals were crowded. "I write as I sip my tea," says Mme. du Deffant to Walpole; "I am interrupted by my cough, which my secretary echoes. The whole house has the *grippe;* I know not how long it will go on. It is your villainous London that has sent us this plague by its messengers the fogs. Everybody is ill of this complaint." (December, 1775.)

The wiseheads ascribed the epidemic to the constant fogs which for some time had "shrouded the horizon and prevented any elasticity in the air." As to the doctors, they did not know what to do, and they limited themselves to advising as a precaution-

ary measure that no one should go out of doors fasting.

It was while Paris was suffering from this fell complaint that Lauzun met at the opera an Englishwoman of family, a certain Lady Barrymore, whom he had already known in the course of his various visits to England. She was pretty, full of spirit and fun; but she was "utterly devoid of principle," and it is amusing enough to find the man accusing her of it who hoped to profit by it.

Lady Barrymore [1] made a great sensation in Paris. "She will be glutted with conquests," writes Walpole. "I never saw anybody so much admired. I doubt her poor little head will be quite overset." (To Conway, Paris, Sept. 8, 1775.) Even Mme. du Deffant had received her graciously; her dog Tonton alone had not shared her kind feeling, for he had flown at the pretty Englishwoman, ready to devour her.

All the most fashionable drawing rooms were thrown open to Lady Barrymore. Charmed by so flattering a reception, she determined to remain some time in Paris, and she took a house.

Lauzun went to see her rather frequently, then he fell in love with her and paid her his court; but the beginning of their acquaintance did not run smoothly. One day the English lady having had the kindness to make an assignation in the Bois de Boulogne, had the inhumanity not to keep it. After

[1] Countess of Barrymore: Lady Emily Stanhope, third daughter of William, second Earl of Harrington.

waiting some time, Lauzun went home and wrote her a very indignant note complaining of her conduct. In this letter he used the phrase, "*Vous êtes vraiment bien cruelle de m'avoir fait croquer le marmot.*" ("You are really too cruel to make me kick my heels.") The lady, unfamiliar with the subtleties of the French language, flew to her dictionary, found *croquer* to eat, *marmot* a child, and came to the conclusion that her lover had eaten a baby. "That Lauzun is a monster!" said she to a friend who was present, "I will never see him again as long as I live. Read what he says." And Lauzun had some difficulty in gaining her forgiveness.

An intrigue with Lady Barrymore would fulfil two ends; it would occupy his leisure, and it would have the great advantage of contradicting the malignant reports as to his attachment to the Queen. Would not everyone be convinced of their mistake? The slander would die a natural death. With this laudable end in view Lauzun actually made a declaration to Lady Barrymore. "And how about the Queen?" the young woman replied, with a laugh.

However, their *liaison* was soon the talk of the town, to Mme. de Guéménée's great displeasure. She reproved Lauzun very roundly, and used all the arguments at her command to put an end to this fresh intrigue, but she did not succeed. As to the Queen, she seemed to have no suspicion of what was going on. Of course she was fully informed, but from indifference or pride she gave no sign; Lauzun

was as well received as ever, and his favour had not in any way diminished.

It may be noted that if Lauzun no doubt was in high favour, and if in his presumptuous dreams he imagined he could climb yet higher, many others, who were much less disinterested, aimed at the same end.

Indeed, it is rather amusing to observe that all the more conspicuous men about the Court had but one ruling idea: to dominate the Queen's mind and direct her conduct. This helpless young woman, with no one to guide or support her, unhappy in her marriage, seemed to them an easy prey. They thought here was a place to be besieged and held, and each in his turn made the attempt. The one who should succeed would reign in France. Every coterie that aimed at power had its candidate. Choiseul's faction set its hopes on Lauzun. The Noailles family put forward the Comte de Noailles. Some acted independently, on their own account. The Chevalier de Luxembourg, a man of parts, at first seemed to be attractive; but his reign was of a day and he disappeared. The Duc de Coigny, an elegant courtier, a proud and loyal man of exquisite breeding and the rarest discretion, also joined the ranks. The Prince de Ligne, after some tentative efforts, laughed at his own folly and withdrew.

Besenval, an old Céladon, writes in his Memoirs, with much *naïveté*: "For my part the kindness and confidence extended to me by the Queen, attached me to her unreservedly: while talking to her in the

language suited to a woman of twenty, I aimed only at giving her the consistency proper for her glory, and at securing her happiness. I regarded her as the material which I flattered myself I could work upon."

On a sudden a new favourite appeared on the horizon, and Court oracles pronounced that she would eclipse all that had preceded her.

The Comtesse Jules de Polignac lived quietly away from Court; simple tastes, and a less than modest fortune, led her to prefer the pleasures of domestic life.[1] She was a charming person; it was impossible to see a woman who combined greater beauty of person with sweetness of expression, charm of voice, and most amiable qualities of heart and mind.

The Queen first met her in the month of August, 1775, at a Court fête. Her touching expression of frankness and sensibility appealed to Marie Antoinette. She had always dreamed of having a "bosom-friend" to fill up the void she felt in her life and sympathies. Mme. de Lamballe, Mme. Dillon, and Mme. de Guéménée had in turn been her intimate friends, but neither of them had completely satisfied her aspirations.

The Queen thought she had found in Mme. de Polignac the trustworthy friend, discreet and reserved, whom she had hitherto sought in vain; her simplicity, her lack of fortune and the obscurity

[1] *Née* Polastron. She died in Russia towards the end of 1793, aged forty-four.

of her existence, seemed to guarantee the sincerity of her attachment.

The Comtesse Jules' influence was not at first sole and absolute; she shared it with Mmes. de Guéménée, Dillon, and de Lamballe; but it was soon very clear that the Queen's preference was wholly for the new favourite.

Personally Mme. de Polignac cared little for Court favour, and still less for money. She was simple-minded to the end, and her even temper was free from caprice; modest in her tastes, indifferent to splendour, she preferred obscurity and solitude. She took no part in the intrigues which were plotted under the protection of her influence, and though she received vast sums of money, they were never for herself. But, as we shall soon see, her family and friends abused her weakness and the favour she enjoyed; their greed was unexampled.

In intimate society the Comtesse was a delightful companion: without being remarkably clever she had the grace, refinement and good breeding which may take the place of wit. The little parties at her house were charming, and the hours flew swiftly. Unluckily, she had formed an attachment for the Comte de Vaudreuil, who had entire dominion over her and guided her as he would; the fact was notorious. M. de Vaudreuil was not a man of parts, but of the highest connections, very fashionable, and of the most elegant manner. "There are but two men who know how to address a woman," said Mme. d'Hénin: "de Kain on the stage, and M. de

Vaudreuil in society." He was fond of art and letters, and loved to affect the Mæcenas. But he was deeply in debt, and, in spite of his agreable manners, he had a violent, domineering temper, and unlimited greed for every form of favour. It may be supposed what a stroke of luck he thought the Queen's sudden affection for Mme. de Polignac.

Vaudreuil and Mme. de Polignac tried to form a circle agreeable to the Sovereign, and they succeeded in gathering about them a pleasant and intimate group; the principal figures in it were the Duc de Coigny, whom we know, the Baron de Besenval, Comte d'Adhémar, the Comte de Guines, and some others.

We have already made mention of Besenval, a vain, intriguing Swiss, but extremely clever. In spite of his age—he was nearly fifty—he was fascinating and witty; his white hairs inspired confidence, though he had not, in fact, renounced gallantry. He had a bright expression, at once sentimental and gay, which was attractive to women, and he was notorious for many adventures. "Somewhat morose by nature, and surly at home to his people," says the Prince de Ligne, "he was the most lively man with others, and one of the most amiable that I have ever met." He was very brave, and a pleasing anecdote is reported of him. After seeing nearly the whole of his division killed at Annembourg, he was desired to retire with the few men he had left; but suddenly he reappeared on the field. "What are you doing here, Baron?" he was asked, "your work is done." "What the

devil should I do?" he replied. "It is like being at an opera ball: it is a bore, and yet you stay as long as you hear the fiddles going."

His agreeable conversation and frank manners enchanted Marie Antoinette; he too, in a way, became a favourite, and was for the moment the man in fashion. These two, Vaudreuil and Besenval, led the Polignac set.

The Queen's intimacy with the Comtesse Jules de Polignac was very severely commented on. Mme. Dillon and Mme. de Guéménée, to be sure, led somewhat irregular lives, but Mme. de Polignac's *liaison* with Vaudreuil was a recognized fact; and to take her into friendship with those other two seemed to the Queen's advisers imprudent to say the least of it. Moreover, the Comtesse Jules' sister-in-law and friend was the Comtesse Diane de Polignac, a canoness whose conduct was a subject of much scandal. To crown all, Mme. de Polignac was supposed to have had her religious views poisoned by the errors of the age, and it was feared lest her influence should have a pernicious effect on the Queen's piety.

This new intimacy greatly exercised the Queen's director, the Abbé de Vermond. He repeated, one day, to Mercy, a conversation he had had on the subject with the Queen; it is a perfect revelation as to the moral tone of the Court. Marie Antoinette, alluding to the Queen of Naples' spiritual director, congratulated herself on not having him for her confessor, because he would have insisted on the

practice of religion. "How would he have achieved it?" replied Vermond. "I have never been able to bring you to reasonable behaviour;" then, taking advantage of such an opportunity, he gave the Queen this uncompromising lecture :—

"You have become very indulgent as to morals and reputation. I could prove to you that such indulgence, at your age, and especially towards women, gives a very bad impression; however, I will pass over the fact that you make no inquiry as to a woman's morals or reputation, and that you admit her to your society, and make her your friend, solely because she is lovable. That is not indeed the morality a priest can sanction. But that misconduct, of whatever kind, indifferent morals, and a spotted or ruined reputation, should be regarded as a title to admission into your circle, does you infinite harm. For some little time, you have not even been prudent enough to limit your intimacy to such women as have preserved some credit for sense and good conduct." "The Queen," added the Abbé, "listened to this sermon with a smile, and a sort of approbation and admission. I spoke in a gentle tone, but with the gentleness of pity and deep regret. What is to be done? What can be hoped for after such a confession as that, without any wish or intention of amendment?"

The Polignac party were at first hostile to Lauzun. In their eyes he was the representative of the Choiseul faction; he was moreover the friend of Mme. Dillon and Mme. de Guéménée, and it was very

naturally feared that their rival influence might detract from that of the fresh favourite. There were more than enough reasons for his being viewed very much askance. The Duc de Coigny, the Baron de Besenval, and the Comtesse Jules organized an underhand attack, and tried every means to destroy his position by degrees. Besenval even tried impertinence; but bad taste and want of reticence are not advantageous at Court; the Baron failed rather ignominiously in his attempts, and Lauzun found ways of curing him of them once for all. Thus the efforts of the new coterie were all in vain, and Lauzun remained in favour for some time yet. But though the struggle was apparently dormant, beneath the surface intrigues and secret cabals were carried on with greater virulence than ever.

CHAPTER VI.

1775.

Changes in manners—The taste for English ideas and habits—Races—Gambling—Opera balls—Dress.

IMMEDIATELY on the death of Louis XV. great changes came over the spirit of the Court and of the nation. Alterations took place in manners, habits, and tastes—transformations which were to have a great influence on the fate of the country itself. It is well to take a brief survey of the new tone of society, to which Lauzun largely contributed.

From the first days of the new reign there were two very distinct Courts. The old Court consisted of every one who had a place and occupied a post about the throne. They thought that everything had been quite right in their day and that old customs should be upheld. The young Court, on the other hand, laughed all these traditions to scorn, and scoffed at the haughty reserve of these representatives of a past age; the vexatious etiquette of the old *régime* was the object of its sarcasm; it clamoured for innovations and especially for a gay mode of life; pleasure was its sole aim; it rushed into it with a

sort of intoxication. There was nothing but sports, balls, theatricals, hunting, concerts, entertainments of every description.

One of the first innovations aimed at was a change in the national costume. Ballets and quadrilles were devised representing different nations, or personages of past periods. These were performed by young people of the highest fashion. MM. de Lauzun, de Noailles, d'Havré, and de Guéménée figured in them, as well as MM. Durfort, de Coigny, the two Dillons, the two Ségurs, La Fayette, and others, with the prettiest and youngest of the wives.

For these quadrilles they adopted the costumes of past times: silk capes, feathers in the hat, and brightly coloured ribands. After this, modern costume struck these young people as quite absurd, and they agreed to adopt that which should be best suited to a warlike Court of chivalry and gallantry. The period of Henry IV. symbolized in their eyes the heroic age, and they decided on adopting its costume. Before long they wanted to compel the whole nation to wear it; but the King formally vetoed the idea, to the great disgust of the Queen and the Comte d'Artois, who were at the head of the movement.

This somewhat childish innovation having been wrecked, a new scheme was devised which was fated to lead to far more serious consequences.

For some time past the intercourse between France and England had become much more frequent. Young French noblemen were constant

visitors to London, where they were wonderfully well received in society. The Duc de Lauzun, the Comte de Lauraguais, the Duc de Chartres, the Marquis de Conflans, and many more, had not only made long stays on the shores of the Thames, but had come back full of enthusiastic admiration for English manners and customs, and possessed by the one idea of transplanting them to Paris. As they, the courtiers of fashion, ruled the fashion, nothing could be easier, and after a few timid attempts, all the world was bitten by a perfect Anglomania.

They were not satisfied with adopting the close frock in the place of the full and dignified coats of the old Court dress, and the light cabriolet instead of antique coaches; our parks were to be reformed; straight paths, symmetrical beds, trees slipped into globes, and regular hedges, gave way to "English gardens." Ladies wore nothing but gowns *à l'Anglaise*, poplins, tabinets, English cloth and lawn; they sold their diamonds to buy steel beads and English paste. Gobelins tapestry was stowed away in cupboards, and blue English paper took its place. The evenings were devoted to tea-drinking, and eating bread and butter.

But while thus borrowing from our neighbours their dress and their habits, we could not but be insensibly led to adopt their customs in more serious and important matters. The part played by the peers in the House of Lords, and the members of the House of Commons, fired the young men who had been to England, and they came back with their

heads full of dangerous innovations. They were not content to admire the institutions of free England; they wanted to ingraft them on France. The position of the English peers and the influence they exerted fascinated the French nobility more than the domestic life of Versailles. "I would rather be the least of the Members of Parliament," wrote Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, "than even King Frederick himself."

The authorities saw only the superficial and frivolous aspect of all these changes, and did not seem to suspect the hidden danger that lurked beneath.

A complete spirit of revolt seemed indeed to have taken possession of society. From a passion for English customs they soon proceeded to discussing the Government and criticizing everything. The women in their boudoirs, the young men in public, and even in the King's ante-chamber, uttered the most seditious speeches. The nobility, far from opposing a movement which threatened its time-honoured rights, put themselves at the head of it and favoured it by all the means in their power. The "Philosophers" were welcomed and made much of in the drawing-rooms of the aristocracy. Nay, it was there that they found their most fervent adepts. Everybody was carried away by the enthusiasm of new ideas of reform, improvements, liberty, tolerance, and legal equality.

The most important modifications were not only in dress and ideas. There were serious changes in

the details of daily life; the Court took the initiative in dangerous forms of pleasure, such as gambling and racing, and evil consequences rapidly ensued.

It was not till the beginning of this reign that a taste for racing seemed to take a serious hold on society. Lauzun, who had often owned racers in England, put himself at the head of the movement; he won the interests of the Queen and of a part of the Court. We have already seen that in March and October, 1775, he had run horses in the presence of the Royal Family.

From that date the fashion was set; races were frequently held, and almost always graced by the Queen's presence. Lauzun, whose horses were constantly engaged, attended the Queen.

However, this new amusement gave rise to many protests. The jockey, starved or doctored to diminish his weight, was the subject of much satire, and the severer spirits lamented the ascendency of such low pleasures over the old spirit of chivalry. Nevertheless the taste for horse-racing grew and spread: the Plaine de Sablons became to the French what Newmarket was to the English. An immense crowd collected, arriving in coaches, on horseback or on foot, to be present at these meetings; the betting was as eager as in England, and the passion for gambling infected not the nobility alone but even the humblest citizens.

At last the King was provoked by these amusements, over which such large sums

changed hands, and he prohibited them almost entirely.[1]

But Louis XVI. was too good-natured to maintain the interdict; the very next year races were as much in vogue as ever; indeed, another race-course was made at Vincennes, and a third at Fontainebleau.

The owners were chiefly the same: the Comte d'Artois, the Duc de Chartres, the Duc de Lauzun, the Marquis de Conflans, the Prince de Guéménée. Lauzun was the most constant winner, either because he had better horses or secured more experienced jockeys. The Comte d'Artois, on the contrary, was almost always a loser, and his disappointment, which he could not conceal, was a delight to the spectators.

For a variety sleigh races were instituted, which amused the Queen very much. The luxury of these little carriages became extravagant; a

[1] The rage for betting had, however, become so great that everything was made the subject of a wager. Thus the Duc de Chartres, Lauzun, and the Marquis de Fitz-James laid a bet of two hundred louis as to which of them could walk fastest from Paris to Versailles. M. de Fitz-James won by seven or eight minutes. A rather droll wager was laid between the Duc de Chartres and the Comte de Genlis. The Comte bet that he would go to Fontainebleau and back in less time than it would take the Prince to prick 500,000 pin-holes into paper: he won by several hours. The Comte d'Artois had in the Bois de Boulogne a little suburban chalet called Bagatelle. He bet the Queen a hundred thousand francs (£4000) that he would build a palace there in six weeks. Nine hundred workmen were employed day and night. As materials ran short, patrols of the Swiss Guard seized, on the high roads, carts loaded with building stone, lime, plaster, and the like; they were paid for, but the public were nevertheless very indignant. At the end of the six weeks the Prince entertained the Queen splendidly in his new residence.

sleigh might cost as much as ten thousand crowns. Then donkey races were run, which also gave rise to heavy betting : the winner received a hundred crowns and a golden thistle.

The success of racing as an amusement for the populace had become so great that a society was founded at Paris for establishing an arena for bull-fights as in Spain. A theatre was to be built to accommodate 25,000 persons, and the men and beasts were to be imported from Andalusia.

But racing was not the only fatal passion that possessed the Court; another and more dangerous fashion was the love of play. Play was indeed no novelty; it had been a favourite diversion during former reigns. Mme. de Montespan played bassett with stakes that might mount up to a million francs. With her, losses of a hundred thousand crowns were not uncommon ; it is said that on a certain Christmas night she lost 700,000 crowns ; she staked 150,000 *pistoles* on three cards. "The passion for play is at the root of almost every misfortune here," wrote the Duchesse d'Orléans in 1720. "I am often told, 'You are not good for anything, you do not like cards.'" From the beginning of the Regency this taste had turned every brain. The streets of Paris were lighted up at night by the fire-pots in front of the houses of the greatest gentlemen, which were thrown open for gambling to all comers.

Walpole had written to West so early as 1737 :—

"You would not guess their notions of honour. I'll tell you one: it is very dishonourable for any gentleman not to be in the army, or in the King's service

as they call it, and it is no dishonour to keep public gaming-houses; there are at least a hundred and fifty people of the first quality in Paris who live by it. You may go into their houses at all hours of the night and find hazard, faro, etc. The men who keep the hazard-table at the Duke of Gesvres' pay him twelve guineas each night for the privilege."

Later than this, play was still the fashion; but at Court no games of pure chance had been played; only Cavagnole, a sort of *lotto*, and the like. High play was to be found in the Mistresses' rooms, but never in the Queen's.

In the reign of Louis XVI. the rage for play reached an incredible height. Marie Antoinette first played at Mme. de Guéménée's and at Mme. de Lamballe's; then one day at Fontainebleau she asked leave of the King to play faro, and to send to Paris for the bankers. The King, weak as usual, objected that games of pure chance were forbidden; at last, as a great treat, he gave the required permission, but for *once only*. So they played for thirty-six hours without stopping, and for two nights in succession the Queen sat at the card table till five o'clock in the morning. Thenceforth card playing was an established thing at Court, and many evils were the result, some of a serious character. The least was the introduction of men of bad repute, whose sole merit was their love of gambling.

As soon as such an entertainment was arranged bankers were sent for from Paris, often mere rogues. They began by losing to allure their victims, and then raked in everything laid on the table.

An Englishman of inferior birth named Smith arrived in Paris, announcing that he had two hundred thousand louis d'or to lose. He was at once presented to the Queen and Royal Family. He was admitted to play cards with her Majesty, and in a very short time had won more than a million and a half francs from the princes and noblemen who played against him. Of course he became familiar and insolent; he was seen at supper with the Comte d'Artois and the Duc de Chartres, his elbows on the table in the most free and easy manner.

The Queen frequently lost or won 500 louis d'or in an evening. Once, at Marly, she gained 7000 louis; the same evening the Comtesse d'Artois lost 25,000 crowns, and Madame lost 50,000; the Duc de Chartres, at Fontainebleau, lost 30,000 louis, and M. de Chalabre 42,000 louis in a few hours. On another occasion, the same M. de Chalabre won 1,800,000 francs in one evening.

It was chiefly at Marly that the passion for play was most frankly displayed; etiquette was there much relaxed, anyone might present himself at the Queen's table so long as he had a decent coat on. The drawing-room was very large, and of octagonal shape; it was roofed by a dome with galleries under it, where ladies who had not been presented could easily get leave to sit and enjoy the sight of this brilliant company.

None below the rank of Duchesses had a right to take a place at the Queen's table to play faro or lansquenet. The men stood up behind their chairs

and handed their money or notes to the ladies to be staked by them. Rich men and the lovers of high play never failed to appear on these evenings at Marly. They rushed there in crowds *en polisson* (like cads), to use the phrase that was applied to them.

This reckless gambling led to the most deplorable consequences: one day it was discovered that weighted dice had been introduced. On another occasion Comte Arthur Dillon came to the Queen's table with a pocket book full of Exchequer bills; in an instant the pocket book had disappeared and it was impossible to find it. There was a talk of searching every gentleman in the room. Several times, at Marly, false louis were substituted for real coin, and the players dared to suspect the ladies of the Court! The passion of play had become such a mania that no one scrupled to trick the croupiers.

The King was severe on this frenzied play, for he only cared for lotto and blind man's buff with forfeits, and by way of games of chance never played anything but backgammon and *petits-écus*. The Queen meanwhile staked enormous sums, and he dared not forbid it. Indeed it was done behind his back. High play never began till after he had retired for the night. When he spent the evening with the Princesse de Guéménée, the cards were put away a quarter of an hour before he came in and taken out again after his departure.

Nor was it only the habit of gambling that had upset the customs of society. The Court had acquired habits of excessive independence and dissipation.

Louis XVI. always went to bed at eleven o'clock. As soon as he withdrew, the Queen and her intimate circle took wing in search of amusement either at Versailles or at Paris. But as they were often in a hurry to be off, some inventive genius hit on the idea of getting rid of the King by putting the clocks forward. This was done ; and they had recourse to this ingenious plan whenever time was pressing.

The Queen was constantly escaping from Versailles to go to the masked balls at the Opera. "It is considered very fine when you are crushed there," writes Mercier. "The greater the mob the more you congratulate yourself next day on having been there. Duchesses, bourgeoises, and drabs, all are shrouded under the same domino." The mixture of ranks was complete. The Queen spoke to everyone, walked about with a train of young men, and all was done with a taint of familiar liberty which was excessively repugnant. "She fancied she was never recognized,' wrote the Prince de Ligne, "but she always was. Some ball-intrigue was constantly devised to give her the pleasure of her *incognito*. She was especially eager to puzzle foreigners, which gave rise to much talk.

"I did not like her going to these balls, in the first place, on that very account, and also because of the next day. She never was tiresome but on these occasions, for she had so much to tell about the masqueraders and what she had said, and what had been said to her, that it was intolerable. If we had chosen to do the same it might have been more amusing than her so-called adventures."

When Marie Antoinette went to these balls she did not get home to Versailles before six in the morning. One night the King in a fury had all the gates shut, and the Queen, on returning from Paris with the Comte d'Artois, could not find admission. The result was an extremely lively scene between the husband and wife, and Louis XVI. as usual succumbed.

Hand in hand with the rage for cards, races, and betting of every kind, the passion for dress had assumed proportions till now unimagined. Women ruined themselves in dresses, mantles, caps, etc. The Queen, who had a great love of dress, set the example of mad prodigality in such things. The fashion of allegorical head-dresses had made yet further progress. The women's heads were to be seen surmounted with hill-tops, meadows, windmills, etc.; and an enormous plume supported the structure from behind.

Old folks were severe on this fashion. Caps *à la bonne maman* were at once devised; they had concealed springs to raise or lower them at will; in the presence of ancestral elders the cap was of ordinary and modest proportions; out of the reach of a scolding the springs were released, and the cap was of due proportion to satisfy the requirements of fashion and good style. Women of rank wore plumes two or three feet high; they could not pass under the doorways or go into a box at the theatre. As to riding in a carriage it was only possible by kneeling down. Their faces were seen in the middle of their figures. In short, the most extravagant follies were invented,

every week saw the advent of some new device in the way of a head-dress. The outlay on dress exceeded that on the table and in carriages.

The Queen's love of dress drove her to expenses far beyond the sum that was allowed her. She had also a passion for jewels and diamonds, and was constantly buying new ones; when her money was spent she took them on credit, and she soon was deeply in debt, to Mercy's despair.

The report of all that was going on at Versailles roused the indignation of Joseph II. and Maria Theresa. Joseph said that the Court of France had been turned into a gambling hell. He wrote, May, 1777, that if somebody could not stop or hinder it, "the revolution would be terrible."[1] The Empress wrote to her daughter that she was rushing to her ruin.

[1] D'Arneth, *Marie Antoinette, Joseph II., et Léopold II.*, p. 14.

CHAPTER VII.

1775.

Lauzun in favour—His political plans—He lays them before the Queen—Correspondence with Catherine of Russia—M. de Luxembourg's schemes—Catherine proposes to Lauzun that he should enter her service—A conversation with the Queen—The heron feather—Lauzun visits Chanteloup—The affair of the Duc de Guines—Dismissal of Turgot and Malesherbes—Necker as Finance Minister—M. de Saint-Germain at the War Office—Reforms—The Order of Perseverance—Death of the Prince de Conti.

LAUZUN'S quarrel with Princess Czartoriska had naturally led to a cooling of his schemes with regard to Poland. M. de Vergennes on his part had not carried out the negotiations tentatively begun through Lauzun's mediation. The Empress, who wished to treat with France, had not been pleased at this check to the affair, but, not choosing to put herself forward, she resigned herself to await events.[1]

Lauzun was fascinated by what he had heard of Catherine, and dreamed of going to Russia if he should find no standing ground in France, and it occurred to him to take advantage of his favour with

[1] We shall not dwell on Catherine's schemes, but refer the reader to M. Wasilewski's two remarkable volumes, *Le Roman d'une Impératrice* and *Autour d'un Trône*.

the Queen to reopen negotiations with Russia, in his own person, but on a far more serious basis. "I wanted," he says, "to make Marie Antoinette the monarch of a great Empire, to see her at the age of twenty playing a splendid part, which might have made her for ever famous. In short, I wanted to see her the arbitrator of the fate of Europe." What he does not say, but it may easily be guessed, is that he proposed to play the part himself, the Queen being no more than an instrument in his hands.

Lauzun needed first of all to make certain of Catherine's consent. He therefore wrote to her, proposing to her a formal treaty to the advantage of both nations. This treaty, when signed by the Empress, was to be placed in the hands of Marie Antoinette, who would persuade the King to give his adhesion and carry all before her with a high hand. This settled, there would be nothing more to do but to convince the Council, who would not dare resist the Royal will, and the trick would be done! What the slow ill-will of the Ministers had so long prevented would thus become an accomplished fact, thanks to the audacity and skill of a mere Courtier.

The Empress received Lauzun's proposals with favour, and gave him full powers to draw up a scheme for a formal alliance between the two nations. All that then remained was to get the Queen's consent. This was the easiest thing in the world, or so at least Lauzun thought, for he did not doubt that she would contemplate with rapture the brilliant future he was preparing to offer her.

Unfortunately, when he laid his schemes and hopes before her, with all the ardour and spirit of which he was capable, Marie Antoinette, instead of expressing great enthusiasm, heard them with extreme reserve; without absolutely rejecting the plans proposed to her, she asked time for reflection. The Duc at once perceived that he had made a mistake, and that the Queen was not a woman to rush into such vast political schemes; her levity and small scope—or perhaps her good sense—would not allow of it.

Nevertheless, being unwilling to give up dreams he had so long cherished, Lauzun begged Marie Antoinette not to reply at once, and not to refuse her co-operation till after mature reflection.

A short time after, the Chevalier de Luxembourg, who was considered to be one of the Queen's favourites, requested a private audience. Again it was to discuss the affairs of Russia and Poland. The Chevalier expatiated on a complete plan for placing the Comte d'Artois on the throne of Poland. The Queen restricted her reply to saying that she would not, on any account, interfere in affairs of State. But she immediately sent for Lauzun and told him all that the Chevalier de Luxembourg had just said to her. Lauzun took advantage of the circumstance to urge upon her once more the treaty with Catherine, and point out the glory she might derive from it. But Marie Antoinette was so much terrified at the idea of rushing into political intrigues, and showed such a dread of the consequences, that Lauzun understood that his plans were irremediably doomed, and

that he must abandon them. This was a keen and bitter disappointment.

Though Marie Antoinette declined to follow Lauzun in this dangerous path, she was not the less touched by the zeal he displayed for her glory, and the Duc was in higher favour than ever. She rode out with him almost every day, invited him to her card table, and addressed him constantly, and she went every evening to Mme. de Guéménée's rooms, where she was sure of meeting him.

Before long she became desirous of securing his future prospects by obtaining for him one of the high posts at Court, and one evening, at Mme. de Guéménée's, she offered him the reversion of the command of the King's Body Guard, then under the command of M. de Villeroy. Lauzun, much surprised and touched by the Queen's thought for him, when he had asked for nothing, thanked her with effusion and with every mark of the deepest gratitude, but would not accept the promotion she offered. As she asked, in great surprise, the reason for his refusal, he replied with much gallantry, "I should wish to be free to quit the Court on the day when your Majesty may regard me with less favour."

Some time later, and again at Mme. de Guéménée's rooms, the Princesse de Bouillon was rallying Lauzun about the passion he was cherishing in his heart. The more he denied it the more she persisted. At the end of all arguments Lauzun at last exclaimed : "But at any rate tell me the name of the lady who is the object of my devotion ! "

"The Queen," replied the Princesse in a whisper, putting her finger to her lips.

Lauzun, really uneasy as to the possible consequences of such perfidious gossip, went to Marie Antoinette; he told her that a base interpretation was given to his attachment to her, that the kindness with which she honoured him was blamed, and he implored her to permit him to present himself less often in her circle. The Queen, much agitated, declared that she would never yield to insolent insinuations, and when Lauzun proposed to leave the country she forbade it. Lauzun, indeed, in his Memoirs records a highly emotional scene, which we think it well not to treat too seriously, since we have never met with any other document which either proves or disproves its veracity.[1]

Lauzun's negotiations with the Empress Catherine had meanwhile become talked about. Whether the Queen had not kept his secret, or by some other means, M. de Vergennes was informed of all that had taken place; he had mentioned it in high wrath at a meeting of the Council, and had even spoken very seriously of treating Lauzun as a State criminal, and consigning him to the Bastille. This somewhat high-handed method of procedure would have had the

[1] "Do you think," said the Queen, "that I will not defend you?" "I request, I dare even to insist, as the sole reward of my devotion, that your Majesty must not be compromised by upholding me. I can defend myself. . . . Ah, Madame, can the private interests of a mere subject be compared with the great interests of a Queen?" "But such a subject as you, Lauzun!" Her eyes were full of tears. (*Mémoires de Lauzun.*)

advantage of bestowing out of the way a too active personage, whose favour at Court disturbed and inconvenienced a great many gentlemen.

At this juncture, Lauzun, who had warned Catherine that she could not count on the Queen's support, received a most amiable letter from the Empress, pressing him to enter the Russian service with exceptional advantages.[1]

On receipt of this letter Lauzun requested an audience of the Queen in Mme. de Guéménée's rooms. He laid the whole situation before her; he told her that in France he was in danger of being arrested at any moment, and that in Russia a brilliant position awaited him. "At the same time I will not quit France as a criminal," he added, "and I will not give up the King's service without his permission; if I am attacked, I will justify myself, but afterwards I shall go to Russia."

In vain did the Queen endeavour to make him give up this plan of action; all she could obtain was that he would ask the Empress to grant him six months for his preparations. "Give me a year?" said the Queen, "and I hope to find means of keeping you here." Then in her anxiety to give him a

January 10th, 1776.

[1] Monsieur le Duc,—Having for some time formed a plan for regularizing and disciplining the different Cossacks, Turks, and Bashkirs in my service, I hereby offer you the chief command of those troops as well as of the regiment of horse guards which I propose to select of those mixed nationalities. You may engage as many foreign officers as you may deem desirable. This post, one of the most important in the Empire, will secure you the consideration of my successor if God should not prolong my days on earth. (Bibliothèque Nationale, MSS.)

place that would make him care to remain in France, she offered him the reversion of the appointment of chief Equerry, held by M. de Tessé. Lauzun replied that such a nomination would seem to justify the slanders of which he was the subject, and also cast a doubt on his disinterestedness. He refused, provisionally, but he consented to wait a year before accepting the Empress Catherine's proposals.

The Queen as she retired spoke a few words in a low voice to Mme. de Guéménée.

A few days previously Lauzun had come to the Princesse's in uniform, wearing the finest white heron's plume it was possible to conceive of. This plume was the object of the Queen's desires, and she had begged the Princesse to ask him to give it her. Lauzun sent an express messenger to fetch the precious feather and gave it to Mme. de Guéménée. Next day, at dinner, the Queen wore the heron's plume in her head-dress. It needed no more to show Lauzun that his influence might henceforth be paramount.

But the Queen's imprudence was talked about; it gave rise to much excitement at Court, and the Duc de Coigny especially put himself at the head of a cabal to overthrow his favoured rival.

Lauzun, not a little uneasy at the turn events were taking, and anxious not to expose himself to a notorious fall after a too rapid rise to fortune, was still planning to get away. He proposed to travel, to go to Italy for a few months, and give these Court broils time to calm down. But the Queen and

Mme. de Guéménée so strongly urged him not to leave France that he yielded to their opinion, and contented himself with paying a visit to Chanteloup, where the Choiseuls still lived in their magnificent retirement.

He was not fated to find there the peace of mind he had hoped for. No sooner had he arrived, and been warmly welcomed by everyone at the Château, than Mme. de Gramont took him in hand, and very seriously. The Duchesse was thoroughly informed of all that had been going on at Versailles ; she knew of all the Court intrigues, and had heard all the gossip, good and bad ; she, consequently, knew very well all that had been surmised or reported with regard to Lauzun, and the splendid fortunes which were freely predicted on his behalf.

As she was not a person of rigid virtue—for, indeed, morality for its own sake was a matter to which she seems to have been indifferent—she was by no means dismayed at the indiscreet rumours current as to her young relation's conduct ; she regarded it as of no consequence, excepting so far as some benefit might be obtained from such a stroke of luck.

As Lauzun, by his intimacy with the Queen, enjoyed so much influence, he must be made to use it in favour of the Duc de Choiseul, and, consequently, to her advantage, since she was her brother's despotic ruler. Madame de Gramont, eaten up by ambition, could not reconcile herself to the fact that she no longer held the reins of power. She

thought the moment had come for seizing them again, and she had a very precise explanation with Lauzun, in the course of a long interview soon after his arrival.

After congratulating him on so flattering a conquest as that which was attributed to him, she told him very plainly that in his position nothing was impossible for him, and that he ought to employ his influence to secure Choiseul's recall.

Lauzun earnestly protested against the lady's audacious inferences. He said that the Queen certainly treated him with distinction, but nothing more. "And, moreover," he added, "I have no pretensions to any influence, and am quite determined never to ask for anything, either for myself or for others." The Duchesse complimented him on his discretion, but assured him that she knew what she knew. "The Queen's liking for you," she said, "is patent to all, and will no doubt lead to its natural result. At the propitious moment you must have M. de Choiseul recalled as Minister."

Lauzun again assured Mme. de Gramont that there was no ground whatever for her suppositions, and added, "I am not in a position to attempt such intrigues, and if I were I would not do it. No one is more devoted than I am to M. de Choiseul, and I believe I could do him no worse service than by helping his return to the conduct of affairs. No man in Europe has enjoyed so much consideration or so high a reputation; he is the only Minister who ever saw the King who banished him deserted by

his own courtiers in favour of an exile. He could only be a loser by a return to power."

The imperious lady flew into a rage, indignant at his refusal to make his influence subserve the aggrandizement of his family, but Lauzun remained inflexible.

M. and Mme. de Choiseul, being informed of the ground of quarrel, thought their nephew in the right. But Mme. de Gramont could never forgive his opposition, and from that day forth she was his implacable enemy.

Lauzun stayed a little longer with his relations, but after these lively disputes he felt less at his ease than in former days. M. and Mme. de Choiseul were always delightfully kind to him, but the Duchesse de Gramont, on the contrary, made herself so disagreeable that he determined on abridging his stay and returning to the capital.

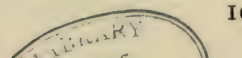
During the Carnival, Mme. de Guéménée gave a ball for the Queen every Saturday. There was dancing in some of the rooms, and card-playing in others, to suit all tastes. One Saturday evening Lauzun was seated at the card-table with the Comte d'Artois, the Duc de Chartres, and two others; they were playing Fifteens. On a sudden Mme. de Guéménée came in greatly agitated; she signed to Lauzun to rise at once and come to speak with her. Lauzun thought that his hour had come, and that he was to be consigned to the Bastille. His political scheming and the favour he enjoyed might at any moment bring down such a catastrophe on him. Happily it was not he who was implicated.

The Comte de Guines was the person in difficulties. He had just been recalled from London, where he was Ambassador, in consequence of the scandal caused by certain revelations made by his secretary, Tort, who accused him of having introduced smuggled goods under cover of diplomatic privilege, and also of having gambled in the funds, by taking advantage of the information he was enabled to procure.

On arriving from England, M. de Guines had gone straight to Mme. de Boufflers (the Idol). She was giving a great supper at which were present the Prince de Conti, the Duc de Choiseul, Mme. de Gramont, Mme. de Luxembourg, Mme. de Lauzun, and some others. He informed his friends of his misfortunes; all the Choiseul coterie, whose creature he was, were greatly alarmed, and it was decided that Lauzun must be warned without loss of time. His influence alone seemed equal to the task of averting the storm which threatened the Ambassador.

Mme. de Guéménée, in a few words, explained the state of affairs; she implored him to save M. de Guines, and added that there was not an instant to be lost.

The Queen was conversing with the Duc de Coigny in an adjoining room. Lauzun did not hesitate; he went to her at once and laid the case before her. M. de Coigny was of opinion that she ought not to interfere in the matter; Lauzun on the contrary declared that she could not desert a man in whom she had shown her interest, that such neglect would have a very bad effect, and he finally won the day. "I am convinced



and resolved," said the Queen; "I will act on M. de Lauzun's opinion," and she graciously added, turning to him: "I will gladly do whatever you think best in the matter." She then went back to the ball-room.

The Queen's influence was soon perceptible. The trial was ended, and Tort was condemned to a heavy penalty for libel. But the rehabilitation of the Ambassador was not yet complete. Marie Antoinette persuaded the King, in spite of his resistance, to create the Comte, Duc de Guines, and the monarch announced the honour in a letter which the Queen made him re-write three times, because she did not think it sufficiently flattering.

Nor was this all. The Queen demanded the dismissal of all who had opposed her action. D'Aiguillon, the hated leader of the old cabal, was the first to be sacrificed. Malesherbes and Turgot, who had caused the recall of the Ambassador, shared the Duc d'Aiguillon's fate. "The Queen would have liked," Mercy writes to the Empress, "that the Sieur Turgot should be dismissed and, moreover, put in the Bastille, the same day when the Comte de Guines was created Duc. Only the strongest and most urgent representations availed to prevent the results of her anger."

On hearing of these events Mme. de Choiseul writes to Mme. du Deffant in the highest spirits: "I, like you, was transported with joy at M. de Guines' success; it seems to me that the disgrace of the two Ministers, which followed on it, makes him

seem like a Roman in triumph dragging his slaves in his train."

The whole Court rejoiced to be rid of Turgot. "On the day when this Minister was banished," writes Mercier, "the King was enthusiastically cheered as he passed along the corridor. This is the highest praise ever bestowed on Turgot. It was as if an organized body of highwaymen were rejoicing over the disbanding of the road-side police. Their joy seemed so outrageous to the Neapolitan Ambassador that he said: "I feel as though I were looking on while a rich man dismissed his honest steward, and the insolent subordinates dared rejoice in their master's presence, because the honest steward had kept a bridle on them." He also said to one of his friends who spoke with dissatisfaction of these changes: "*Basta!* Do not be uneasy, these are the King's milk-teeth."

Turgot's place was filled by M. de Clugny, M. Amelot took that of Malesherbes. This very indifferent selection made the Prince de Ligne wittily exclaim: "In the country where most men of parts are to be found, the ministers are always chosen among men who have none."

The most important outcome was the appointment of M. Necker to be Minister of Finance. It was the first time since the reign of Henri IV. that a Protestant had sat on the King's Council. Necker had the clergy against him on account of his creed, the lawyers on account of his calling, and the financiers on account of his schemes; but he was

ambitious, and uniquely conceited; he believed it to be his mission to save the State, and by dint of assertiveness he succeeded for some years in making the world believe that he was capable of doing it.

Then, after all these changes which disturbed the administration, came the necessity for a new War Minister. In the month of October, 1775, M. de Muy having died, his place was given to M. de Saint-Germain, a mediocre and very devout man. He distinguished himself on taking up his appointment by considerable alterations, most of them for the worse. Among other things he declared that he was about to reform the army; to this end he took it into his head to introduce corporal punishment of soldiers, beating with a stick as was customary in the German armies. Being anxious to make sure of the efficacy of the system, he consulted a Major of an Infantry regiment of Nassau, who had been a soldier in the ranks, asking him what he thought of the thrashings. "Monsieur le Comte," said the officer, "I have taken many and I have given many, and I never was the worse for it." Strengthened by this assurance, M. de Saint-Germain promulgated his decree, but it gave rise to unanimous remonstrance. He was bitterly charged with having attempted to degrade the French military spirit by giving it a German tone.

Old Maréchal de Lückner, a Bavarian who had been a Colonel of Prussian Hussars, said, "They may do what they will and torture their men: happily for them they can never make Prussians of them."

At the beginning of 1776, M. de Saint-Germain, pursuing his innovations, decided on reforming all the legions. Lauzun went therefore to join the Legion under his command. By the Queen's desire M. de Saint-Germain offered him a regiment of twelve hundred light horse, then that of the Schomberg Dragoons, then the Chamborant Hussars ; but the Minister's ill-will hindered Lauzun's acceptance of either of these proposals. Finally M. de Saint-Germain proposed that he should take the regiment of Royal Dragoons, which was supposed to be the most insubordinate of the whole army. Lauzun, offended at the treatment he had been subjected to, at once refused, but the King having sent for him and urged him to accept it, he gave way. The Minister was to leave him the choice of a station, and though the price of the regiment was forty thousand crowns, he was to have it for nothing.

In the spring of 1776 races were again instituted, to the great delight of the Paris world. Lauzun spent large sums on his stables, and always had horses in the field. The Queen, following his example, took constantly increasing pleasure in this form of amusement, and was always present at the races on the Plaine de Sablons ; she wished to have a racing establishment of her own, but the King would not allow it.

In the month of April, a match was run between Lauzun and the Duc de Chartres : enormous sums were laid in bets. The Queen was aware of this and

feared a defeat for her favourite. "I am so afraid that if you lose I shall cry!" said she. Lauzun won, and the populace, who admired his chivalrous and adventurous character, expressed their satisfaction by hailing him with applause. The Queen on her part made no secret of her joy.

A few days later, during a hunting party in the Bois de Boulogne, Marie Antoinette observed a very pretty horse belonging to Lauzun: "Is it quiet?" she asked. "Is it safe for a woman?" On receiving an affirmative reply: "Then I should like to have it," said she. Lauzun laughed and said he did not wish to part with it. "Then I shall take it," she said also laughing.

The Duc de Coigny, who was charged by the Polignac faction to keep an eye on the Queen, overheard the last words: he immediately repeated them, and much petty mischief ensued.

Not long after, the Queen heard that Mme. de Lamballe was ill of the measles at Plombières. She was much distressed, for she still had a sincere attachment to her; she was afraid that her friend's real state might be concealed from her, and longed at any cost for some direct news. Lauzun, seeing her grief and anxiety, offered to go to Plombières and learn the truth himself, so as to send the Queen exact information as to the progress of the complaint. She gratefully accepted the offer. He found Mme. de Lamballe much better, and had the pleasure of letting the Queen know at once. He then took advantage of his journey to Lorraine to take leave of

his old regiment. His soldiers, whom he had always treated kindly, and who loved his frank and loyal nature, gave him many touching proofs of affection and regret.

Having fulfilled this duty, he went to Sarrelouis, where his new regiment was quartered. He there had an unpleasant surprise: M. de Saint-Germain, who had promised him the Colonelcy of the Royal Dragoons without payment, now demanded forty thousand crowns. This surprise was all the more painful, because Lauzun was beginning to be much straitened for money.

During his stay at Sarrelouis Lauzun received from Mme. de Guéménée a long letter telling him that Mme. de Polignac had begged of the Queen the reversion to her husband of the post of First Equerry, then held by the Comte de Tessé. But Marie Antoinette, who had some time since offered the prospective appointment to Lauzun, would not pledge herself without his consent. Somewhat surprised that she should propose to give away a place which had been offered to him, and which he had not positively refused, Lauzun saw clearly how seriously threatening to his interests the influence of the Polignacs was becoming. He would not, however, betray his secret feeling. "I replied, as was my duty," he says, "to the Queen and to Mme. de Guéménée, that I had never had the smallest intention of obtaining the appointment, and that I was delighted that her Majesty should dispose of it in her friend's favour. I did my utmost to make my letter

express exactly and lightly that the proposed arrangement was in no way displeasing to me." So Comte Jules de Polignac was nominated.

Lauzun's apprehensions were only too well founded. The Queen could refuse her favourite nothing.[1] M. de Vaudreuil was made High Falconer; the Comtesse Diane, in spite of the improprieties of her conduct, became lady-in-waiting to Madame Elizabeth; M. d'Adhémar was appointed Minister to the Court of Brussels.

Lauzun had returned to Versailles by the beginning of October. He proceeded next day to Choisy, where the Court then was. The Queen received him very kindly, expressed great joy at seeing him again, and conversed with him for a long time in an undertone. As he withdrew after this audience, he had time to overhear the Duc de Coigny say to the Queen: "You have not kept your word, you promised to speak to him but little, and to treat him like everybody else."

The Polignac faction watched Lauzun's favour with daily increasing jealousy, and tried by every means to undermine his influence. They were always afraid lest he should so completely overrule the Queen as to bring about Choiseul's reinstatement. They therefore organized a complete system of espionage; the Queen herself was a victim to their remonstrances,

[1] Madame de Polignac grew in favour as time went on. Mercy tells us that in the years 1779-1780 she received 400,000 francs to pay her debts, the promise of an estate worth 35,000 francs a year, 800,000 francs in money for her daughter's marriage portion, etc.

and their comments. So much so, that feeling herself surrounded by malignant eyes—or rather by friends who kept her in order—at last, for fear of a scolding, she dared never speak to Lauzun in public. He often bantered her on the subject, and she laughingly admitted it.

In the month of November a very interesting race was to be run by two horses belonging to the Comte d'Artois and the Duc de Chartres. The Comte d'Artois' horse, called King Pippin, had cost him seventeen hundred louis, in England. The Queen bet against the Duc de Chartres, and Lauzun against the Comte d'Artois. King Pippin was beaten, and the Queen in a first impulse of annoyance exclaimed to Lauzun: "Monster! you were certain to win!" This unfortunate speech was overheard, and the familiar tone was a shock to the Polignacs. They fancied that Lauzun was in greater favour than ever, and all redoubled their efforts to effect his ruin.

By degrees they achieved it; circumventing the Queen and representing to her the dangers and disadvantages of such a liking. The Duc had been in favour for nearly eighteen months—really a long time for Court favour to endure.

He soon had unmistakable proof that his influence was fast waning. Two ladies of fashion, Mme. de Genlis and Mme. Potocka, in a moment of vanity took it into their heads to found an order of chivalry. The idea was quite in keeping with the sentiments at that time fashionable in Society. The idea indeed was no novelty. At the beginning of the century

the Duchesse du Maine had founded the Order of the Honey-Bee. In 1770, at Bas-sur-Seine, the Order of Constancy had been revived, an ancient foundation of a Comtesse de Champagne. And another Order of Felicity had been created under the auspices of the Duc de Bouillon.

The Order devised by Mme. de Genlis was called the Order of Perseverance: to give it some status it was said to have existed formerly in Poland, where it was held in high honour.

Mme. de Genlis naturally drew up the statutes. She chose the handsomest costumes of ancient chivalry; she added various romantic details of her own invention, and some academic practices. Members were admitted only by ballot; they passed certain tests, but all merely intellectual; they had to guess enigmas and answer questions in morality propounded by the president. Subsequently they had to read or make a speech in praise of some virtue. The president replied in a little moral homily and administered the oaths. Members pledged themselves on all occasions to defend oppressed innocence or weakness, and to bring to light every noble action they could discover. The Knights and Dames were also obliged to adopt a motto. Each Knight chose a Brother-in-Arms and each Lady a Sister. A Lady might choose a Knight or not, as she pleased, but if she took one, he was always chosen in such a way as to give no cause for malicious comments.

The uniform was white and light grey, bound with silver, and a violet scarf. The Knights on being

admitted received a gold ring with the motto of the Order in enamelled letters—"*Candeur et Loyauté, courage et bienfaisance, vertu, bonté, persévérance.*"[1] There were a number of ceremonies, all remarkably childish, but they amused the idlers of Paris society.

Lauzun was one of the first Knights enrolled in the new Order. Among the members were the Duchesse de Chartres, Mme. de Bourbon, and several ladies of the Court; the Comte d'Artois, the Duc de Chartres, etc. The Order became very numerous, very fashionable, and included people of the highest rank. Everybody wished to join; the idea was even suggested of getting permission for the members to wear the violet scarf over their Court uniform, even when attending on the King.

It then occurred to Lauzun to ask the Queen to join the little company; he undertook to get her to do so as Grand Mistress of the Order.

Marie Antoinette, captivated by the childish ceremonies of these knights and ladies, accepted with pleasure. But the Polignac coterie rose in wrath, protesting against it, and with so much effect that the Queen, for the sake of peace, gave up the idea.

This was serious to Lauzun, and unquestionable proof that his rivals were gaining ground and by degrees leaving him behind.

He continued, nevertheless, to be one of the most energetic members of the new order. Indeed, it

[1] "Candour and loyalty, courage and beneficence, virtue, kindness, perseverance."

was in the garden of a small house he had taken at Montrouge that the knights and ladies met, once a fortnight, to hold high council on the subject of Honour, and to eat cakes. A large marquee had been pitched there and called the "Temple of Honour." The glory of the Order of Perseverance was brief. Those who had not joined made jokes at the expense of the initiated, turning them into ridicule with their tests, emblems, and ceremonies. Before long it was forgotten. Fashion had played long enough at chivalry.

In the course of the year 1776, Lauzun had the sorrow of losing his old friend the Prince de Conti, with whom he had always remained on intimate and affectionate terms. The Prince had quarrelled with the Queen; hence, since Lauzun had been in such high favour at Court, he had somewhat neglected his friend. But in former days he had paid long visits to l'Isle-Adam under the kindly hospitality of the Prince.[1]

M. de Conti fell ill in June, 1775. Mme. de Luxembourg, Mme. de Boufflers, her daughter-in-law, and Mme. de Lauzun never left him, and nursed him with the tenderest care. His state soon grew worse, and the end was evidently near. He died on August 2, at the age of fifty-eight.

The Prince had no religious feeling. Seeing his chaplain and his treasurer walking together one day, he remarked, with a laugh, to the friends who were

[1] See *The Duc de Lauzun and the Court of Louis XV.*, chap. ix.

with him: "There go the two certainly most useless members of my household." However, when his state was evidently desperate, an attempt was made to get him to see Mgr. de Beaumont, Archbishop of Paris. The Prince, startled by this unexpected visitor, exchanged a few words with the prelate; he then showed him the door, and when, on two occasions, the Archbishop tried to bring the sacrament to the dying man, the gates were pitilessly closed against him by the porter. The crowd which collected in the street saw this insult to one of the heads of the Church, and the scandal was of course very great. The Archbishop was blamed for not saving appearances by going into the courtyard at any rate, closing the gates, and leaving the people to suppose that he had been admitted to see the dying man.

Mme. de Boufflers, who had lost a friend with whom she had lived for years, was in the deepest grief. To her it was real widowhood. She retired to Auteuil, whither Mme. de Luxembourg like a true friend accompanied her, with Mmes. de Lauzun, de Virville and de Barbentane. Somewhat later "the Idol" settled at Arles, where she had arranged a very pleasant residence. From thence she wrote to Mme. du Deffant, who estimates her letter with the peculiar warmth we know to be her characteristic! "I have had a letter from 'the Idol,' from Arles, very well written and very pathetic. I allowed myself to be touched by it, but then I remembered her behaviour to the late demoiselle de Lespinasse and

my heart closed against her. You are right; we should be made of stone and ice, and above all never esteem any one enough to trust them. All that may be done without either hatred or misanthropy."

CHAPTER VIII.

1777.

The Emperor Joseph II.'s visit—Its consequences.

In 1777 serious intrigues divided and disorganized the Court of France. Two powerful families, the Choiseuls and the Rohans, were waging implacable war. Trusting to the support given them by the Queen under all circumstances, the Choiseuls and their partisans were making more strenuous efforts than ever to seize the reins of power. A visit to Paris from the Emperor Joseph was projected, and the Choiseuls founded high hopes on the sovereign's presence.

The second centre of intrigue was formed by the family of Rohan. This cabal was the most virulent and dangerous at Court, for they hesitated at no means to secure their aims ; the old Comtesse de Marsan was at their head. Marie Antoinette had no great liking for the Rohans, and she did not conceal the fact ; so Mme. de Marsan was confessedly hostile to the Queen.

Long ago Louis XV. had promised the Rohan family that the office of High Almoner of France

should be conferred on Prince Louis at the death of Cardinal de la Roche-Aymon. Louis XVI. on his accession confirmed the promise. But the Choiseuls had made a stir, and the Queen, at their instigation, had induced the King to pledge his word that Prince Louis de Rohan should never be High Almoner.

In 1777 Cardinal de la Roche-Aymon fell seriously ill, and Mme. de Marsan reminded the King of his promise. What was her rage on learning that her enemies had undermined and destroyed the edifice she had so painfully built up. All the Rohans took up the matter; at last they won over M. de Maurepas, and persuaded Mme. de Guéménée to take some steps; while Mme. de Marsan, at a private audience of the King, showed so much determination, that Louis XVI. yielded, and promised to nominate Prince Louis, but for one year only.

Cardinal de la Roche-Aymon did not disappoint the hopes of the Rohans. He died of a violent attack of gout. Although he enjoyed an income of more than six hundred thousand francs (£24,000) he left such enormous debts that his estate did not suffice to pay them all off.

So Prince Louis fell heir to the office of High Almoner, and was also promised a Cardinal's hat. A few days later the King, on the road to Fontainebleau with the Comte d'Artois, met the High Almoner in a carriage; sitting by his side was a young Abbé with a pretty face, his hair carefully powdered and tied: "If only he wore rouge I could

swear it was a woman!" exclaimed Louis XVI. "I should think so indeed!" replied the Comte d'Artois. "It is the Marquise de Marigny." It was she in fact —a natural daughter of Louis XV. who had married Mme. de Pompadour's brother.

Everything seemed to concur to aggrandize the fortune of the Rohans; dignities and riches were heaped on them. The Prince de Guéménée received from the King, in the course of the year, the investiture of all the fiefs of Alsace, and he won a law-suit against the Crown which made him owner of the port of Lorient.

Peace and union prevailed as little between the Royal couple as they did at Court. Notwithstanding advice, the Queen grew no less unreasonable. Differences of taste and incompatibility of temper had inevitably led to a complete estrangement of the husband and wife; they lived quite apart, inhabiting separate rooms, which roused the wrath of Mercy and of Maria Theresa.

This strained situation suggested to some of the courtiers who were eager to better their fortunes, the idea of reviving a Court function which had lapsed since the death of Louis XV.—that of King's Mistress. They cast their eyes on Mademoiselle Contat, who had a pretty face, artless graces, and a delightful voice; but they did not know their ground; their hints were indignantly repelled.

The Queen was not satisfied with devoting herself to a life of pleasure; she wished to have the bestowal of every office in the kingdom. Her favourites of

both sexes worked upon her disgracefully, taking advantage of her influence and power to obtain scandalous privileges. Such favour, unjustly granted to a narrow set, the Queen's love of racing, her passion for games of chance, and her entire contempt of etiquette, produced deplorable results. The rumours of the disgraceful scenes which took place at Versailles or at the King's country residences, gravitated with exaggerated details to the level of the populace. The Queen was the object of extreme disapprobation, and when she appeared in public, instead of being greeted with cheers, as at first, she was received in gloomy silence.

Maria Theresa, much concerned at the accounts she received, and seeing all her advice absolutely wasted, determined on sending her son, the Emperor Joseph II., on a visit to France, that he might try to remedy a state of things which was becoming alarming.

Joseph II. reached Paris in April, 1777, under the name of Count Falkenstein, and preserved a sort of half incognito.

The French Court was greatly excited by this visit, especially the Queen, for she foresaw a severe lecture. Joseph, wishing to form his own judgment as to the situation, begged his sister to introduce him to her private circle. The Emperor disapproved greatly of the Princesse de Lamballe, and made no secret of it. The Queen, who for the last two years had seen less and less of her former favourite, confessed that she had been mistaken in her, and

regretted having given her the post she held; but that mischief was done and no change could be made.

One evening Joseph accompanied his sister to Mme. de Guéméneé's rooms. Faro was of course played, and the Emperor was invited to take a place at the table: "No," said he stiffly, "I am not rich enough; besides, cards bring into the drawing-room many persons whose place is in the ante-room." The gambling went on, and presently, notwithstanding the Queen's presence, one of the players spoke insultingly to Mme. de Guéménée as to the suspicious style of her play. The Emperor withdrew in disgust, and told his sister that the house was nothing better than a gambling hell, and that the bad style of the company and general appearance of license had horrified him. At midnight he took leave of the Queen, who at once went back to Mme. de Guéménée's rooms to finish the game.

But it was to Mme. de Polignac that Marie Antoinette more particularly clung, and she did her utmost to place her in a favourable light in her brother's eyes. The Emperor very wisely observed that he did not dispute the admirable qualities with which the lady might be gifted; but, he added, she was too young, and the persons about her were of too doubtful a character to make her competent to advise his sister.

The Emperor, pursuing his inquiries, wished to be present at a horse-race; though his presence imposed some reserve, he was shocked at the prodigality, and

the excessive familiarity attending this kind of amusement. He lectured his sister a good deal on the unseemliness of her conduct, on the dangers of such society as she gathered about her, and the consequences to which her levity must inevitably lead. They had some very stormy altercations. Finally Marie Antoinette, bowing to her brother's authority, promised amendment.

Notwithstanding his severe censure, Joseph II. did not think ill of her; he did justice both to her good qualities and to the difficulties of her position: "She is amiable and charming," he wrote. "I have spent hours with her without knowing how they had slipped away. Her virtue is spotless; she is even austere, but by instinct rather than from reason. She is a sweet and virtuous woman, rather young, rather heedless, but with a foundation of honesty and virtue which in her position are really admirable. And with it all an intelligence and clear-sightedness which often amazed me."

If the Queen's immediate circle caused the Emperor some anxiety, the Royal Family pleased him but little. "Monsieur is an indescribable creature," he says, "he is even more deadly cold than the King. Madame is coarse and ugly; it is not for nothing that she is Piémontese, full of intrigue, etc."[1] Of the Comte d'Artois, whose intimacy with the Queen he disapproved of: "He is a fop in every sense of the word. His wife, who only has children, is absolutely idiotic." He told the Queen that this

[1] *Marie Thérèse und Joseph II.* A. d'Arneth, vol. ii. p. 134.

Prince's reputation was ruined by his debauchery, his recklessness and his bad manners, and that she would do herself the greatest mischief by allowing him to continue on such terms of intimacy.

Of all the Royal Family the King was after all the personage he liked best. "The man is weak," he writes, "but not imbecile. He has ideas and judgment; but his body and mind are alike apathetic. He talks rationally, he has no taste for information, no curiosity; in short the *fiat lux* has never come to him; matter is still in gloom."

The Emperor had not, however, been sent to France merely to take his sister to task; he was expected to pronounce that *fiat lux* and persuade the King to abandon the platonic attitude he had chosen to assume with the Queen.

The possible promise of an heir to the throne had, to be sure, always filled the Empress-mother with alarm: "I should always fear for the mother and the child," she wrote to Mercy, "both before and after its birth. The most atrocious crimes are held of no account in a country where irreligion is carried to the greatest excess." (October 1st, 1777.) Such a reflection speaks volumes as to the conduct of the French Court.

Mercy, however, to reassure her, writes as follows: "The Court is certainly full of rascals, but at this juncture they are not of a type to commit great crimes. For that some courage in wickedness is needed, and here there are none but mean intriguers."

Joseph II. carried out successfully both the

missions entrusted to him, and had every reason to congratulate himself on having come to France.

Were the factions which divided the Court ever to see the hopes realized which the Emperor's visit had led them to form? The Choiseuls hoped great things, and had made every preparation to profit by the Emperor's stay at the French Court. Unluckily, as soon as he arrived, Joseph announced that he would have nothing to do with any questions of politics; he met Choiseul with pleasure, but avoided any serious conversation; nay, having by chance mentioned the former Minister to the King, he spoke of him with little approbation.

A still greater disappointment awaited Choiseul. Joseph II., on his way from Paris, was to pass very near Chanteloup. Nobody for a moment doubted that he would do the owner the honour of visiting him. Choiseul himself was the first to hope for such a mark of favour, and he had arranged for a magnificent reception; relays of fine horses were laid on the road, and a splendid company were in attendance at the château. Entertainments and fêtes had been prepared. But the Emperor, out of consideration for the King, for M. de Maurepas and the other Ministers, did not stop. Choiseul and his party were in consternation, and the blow was all the greater because the expected visit had been announced with much clamour and ostentation.

Choiseul's enemy, Prince Louis de Rohan, was no better off. He implored an audience of the Emperor, to make, as he said, an important communication on

matters of the highest interest; but he did not even receive a reply.

For a time after her brother's return home, Marie Antoinette was careful enough as to the reforms he had enjoined. Not only did she give up her too flagrant dissipations, her drives to Paris by night, and Mme. de Guéménée's card parties, but she was very attentive to the King, accompanying him with much regularity on his hunting expeditions and his residences at Saint-Hubert. Unfortunately her good resolutions were not very lasting. Before long, not knowing how to spend her days and nights, the Queen took to gambling again, at first in her own apartments with her own circle, then at the public Court drawing-room held three times a week, and finally, from old habit, at Mme. de Guéménée's once more.

This passion, with the long late evenings, again resulted in the King and Queen living apart, the habit which had so much distressed Maria Theresa and Mercy. The Queen in vain declared that the King preferred it; Mercy says it was not so, that the truth was that the King loved early hours and the Queen liked to sit up late.

Then, in spite of her promises, the Queen would again go to the opera-balls, and this misconduct brought upon her this severe lecture from her brother:

"Have the kindness only to think of all the disagreeable adventures you have already met with at these balls, and which you yourself related to me.

Why these scenes, this vulgarity? Why mix yourself up with a mob of libertines, low women and strangers, and listen to such things as you must hear, and perhaps say such things yourself? How unseemly! I may tell you frankly that this is the thing which most scandalizes all who love you and who think respectably. The King is left to spend the night alone at Versailles while you are mixing in society, and lost among the riff-raff of Paris."

In spite of Joseph's remonstrances, the Queen now took up her life of dissipation where she had left it. Her folly and recklessness were the same. In 1779 the Queen had the measles. She desired to have for her attendants MM. de Coigny, de Guines, Esterhazy and de Besenval. The request was outrageous, but as the Queen insisted, the King, weak as usual, gave way; and there was the strange spectacle of a Queen of France surrounded by four young men who waited upon her from seven in the morning till eleven in the evening. They even tried for permission to spend the night in her rooms, but Mercy, hearing of their demand, rebelled and gained his point. At the same time, on the pretext that the malady was infectious, the King was not allowed to see the Queen.

The results were vexatious scandal and pleasantries in the worst taste. The Court all laughed, and the town laughed too. The ladies were named who might nurse the King if he should fall ill.

CHAPTER IX.

1776—1778.

Lauzun's debts—Difficulties with his wife and family—Generous offers from M. de Voyer and from Lady Barrymore—The Queen refuses to intervene—Arrangement with M. de Guéménée—Mme. de Guéménée slanders Mme. de Lauzun—Choiseul's indignation—His interview with Mme. de Guéménée.

At the end of the former volume we saw how precarious Lauzun's financial position had become. From that time there had been no improvement in his affairs; he had continued to fling money about in handfuls, without ever thinking of the future. His extravagant expenditure, his racing stables, his constant journeys, had all contributed to add considerably to the schedule of his debts. In 1777 he was but thirty years of age, and he owed more than two million francs (£80,000). Several of his creditors having shown some impatience, it occurred to Lauzun that it would perhaps be well for him to see his position clearly, and he desired his man of business, Pays, to audit the accounts. The steward made certain of the creditors abate their claims by threatening them with criminal proceed-

ings, and after long disputes the Duc's debts were reduced to the modest total of 1,500,000 francs (about £60,000).

Lauzun was far from troubling himself about such a trifle ; he was the heir to a vast fortune, and he thought it but natural that he should spend it while he was young, thinking, not without reason, that our needs diminish with added years, and that it is only prudent to enjoy the goods of this world while we are able to appreciate them. As to his creditors, he was amazed that they should not feel perfectly secure, as they were certain to be paid sooner or later.

Unfortunately the persons whose interest it was to injure him bought up a large proportion of the bills out against him, and called upon him with legal formalities to pay without delay. His situation was critical ; he was in danger of nothing less than imprisonment for debt, or at the least of outlawry.

The Maréchale de Luxembourg was especially relentless; she spouted fire and flames, telling everybody that Lauzun was a wretch, that he was not content merely to neglect her granddaughter, but that he had ruined her as well. He had nothing to hope for from his family. Mme. de Lauzun positively refused to help him, so did Maréchal de Biron. M. De Gontaut, who had just come into his brother's, the Abbé de Biron's fortune, could have lent him money without inconvenience, but he did nothing of the kind. The whole family made it unmistakably plain that they meant to keep

quite clear of the whole business. The most ill-natured reports were spread; it was said that Lauzun had devoured his wife's fortune, and he had also drawn bills in anticipation of his father's death, of M. de Biron's, Mme. de Choiseul's and Mme. de Luxembourg's.

At this painful phase of his life our hero not only did not find in others the helpfulness on which he had a right to count; he also met with ingratitude from some persons to whom he had been of service. He had the grief of seeing the Choiseuls, their partisans, and M. de Guines, whom he had saved, all turn against him. Choiseul and Mme. de Gramont especially were excessively stern in their treatment. Indignant at this cold rejection, which he certainly had not deserved, for he had in various circumstances shown his strong attachment to his relations, he broke with them completely. It was a real grief to him to see no more of his aunt, Mme. de Choiseul, for whom he had entertained a sincere affection of many years' standing, and she had always shown him the greatest interest and been very indulgent to his follies.

Lauzun was, happily, not forsaken by all; he had the comforting satisfaction of finding that some faithful friends yet were left to him, even in misfortune. M. de Voyer, with whom he had been intimate from his early youth,[1] led a retired life on his estate of Les Ormes, near Tours; he did a great deal of good there, and he also received the most

[1] See *Lauzun and the Court of Louis XV.*, p. 72.

brilliant society of the Court and of Paris. At the first news of his friend's disasters he hurried off to see him, and addressed him in these words:

"My dear Duke, I have an estate called La Guerche, at about four leagues from Les Ormes. The house is very comfortable and well enough furnished. The estate and income are at your service for as long as you please. If the worth of the land is of more use to you—I am offered a million francs for it—I will give it you, and you can do as you like with it."

Lauzun was deeply touched by so generous an offer, but he refused it, not needing it, as he declared.

A few days later be received a mark of attachment of which he was deeply sensible. His connection with Lady Barrymore had been quite ephemeral. The fair Englishwoman had returned home. On hearing that he was ruined she came back to Paris and sent for him at once. "Listen," said she "and do not interrupt me. I am told that you are ruined. I am rich, young and independent. I have come to offer to share your fate and hand you over my fortune. I will travel with you wherever and for as long as you like. Do not fear the levity of my nature. There is nothing that offers me the prospect of so much pleasure and happiness as this plan. You are to assume all the authority of a despotic husband; I will never try to evade it."

Lauzun, much moved by an offer he was so far from expecting, thanked the lady very warmly. He explained to her that his duty was to stay and defy

the storm, and that indeed his position was by no means so desperate as was reported by malicious tongues. He therefore declined the offer made to him with so much heartiness. Lady Barrymore expressed herself deeply disappointed, and returned to England.

As to the Duc de Chartres, whose fortune was enormous, and who had for years received from Lauzun every mark of the most entire devotion, he seemed to be perfectly unaware of his friend's embarrassment, and did not make him the smallest offer of assistance. Lauzun, on his part, was too proud to ask it; and he does not seem for an instant to have thought it the Prince's obvious duty to help him.

Meanwhile, his imminent ruin caused the greatest excitement. The most vexatious and exaggerated misrepresentations were current, and produced a very bad effect at Court. Not choosing to let them pass uncontradicted, Lauzun drew up a very exact statement of his fortune and of his debts, and went to beseech the Queen to lay this document before the King that he might not judge him on mis-information. But Marie Antoinette had fallen under the influence of the Polignacs; they had persistently and incessantly attacked Lauzun: his urgent need of money and his disputes with Mme. de Lauzun had served as the pretext for endless perfidious and spiteful insinuations, and the Queen had not been able to hold her own. She received Lauzun coldly, and expressed some hesitation when he begged her

to speak to the King for him. However, she seemed interested in his misfortunes, and offered him her protection, but with so much haughtiness that the Duc, deeply hurt by a tone he had had no reason to expect, rose, and without further words took his leave of the sovereign. "I ask your Majesty's pardon," said he, "for having troubled you with my private affairs," and he withdrew.

Being still anxious that the King should know the truth as to his pecuniary position, and not be deceived by calumny, he called on M. de Maurepas, and begged him to do him the service he had failed of obtaining from the Queen. The old Minister at once consented; laid the statement in question before Louis, who, always good-natured, offered Lauzun a pension; the idea was even mooted of sending Lauzun as Ambassador to England, as some compensation for his disasters. But Lauzun, hurt and offended by the coldness shown him by the Queen, did not choose to owe anything to the Court, and refused all that could be offered to him.

To escape from the desperate difficulties with which he was struggling, Lauzun, by a deed of April 17, 1777, gave to Pays, his steward and agent, a power of attorney, authorizing him to administer his fortune and pay his creditors. He reserved only 100,000 francs a year: 40,000 for personal expenses, and 60,000 for those of Mme. de Lauzun.

Pays set to work, but his efforts to restore order in his master's affairs were not crowned with success. The creditors proved refractory, and

Lauzun, to put an end to a state of things which each day made more inextricable, came to an arrangement with his friend the Prince de Guéménée ; [1] he made over to him everything of which he stood possessed for an income of 80,000 francs (£3,200 a year).

At the time when his financial difficulties had fallen on Lauzun, a painful mortification awaited him in domestic life. Though he always lived apart from Mme. de Lauzun, and their intimacy was restricted to certain social amenities, their official union had never been severed, and they dwelt under the same roof. In short, they got on no worse together than many, or most, fashionable couples of that day. When the Duc's creditors made the vexatious public scandal of which we have heard, Mme. de Lauzun showed much patience and gentleness, but she declared that she had had enough of their life together, and that she meant to take up her residence with Mme. de Luxembourg. Her husband vehemently opposed this plan. In the first place he hated the Maréchale, who returned the sentiment

[1] By a deed signed in the presence of Maitre Lebrun, notary of Paris, March 11, 1778, Lauzun sold to M. and Mme. de Guéménée "the lands of Le Châtel, and of Carman, with all their dependencies, the possession of a house at Montmorency, the whole of his emoluments derived from the Colonel's perquisites in the regiment of Royal Dragoons, and all the dividends and revenues accruing from the effects handed over to them by this sale, 3,908,000 francs in all, of which the estates of Le Châtel and of Carman represented 3,500,000." In return M. and Mme. de Guéménée undertook to pay all his debts and all pensions and allowances due from Lauzun to other persons. They were also to pay him 65,000 francs a year for life, and 15,000 a year to him and his heirs for ever.

with interest, and he also thought that Mme. de Lauzun's departure would do him harm in the eyes of the public. Unfortunately he had neglected to pay the rent of the house she occupied, and she ran the risk, at any moment, of seeing her furniture seized. Under these circumstances he was obliged to consent to her going to live with her grandmother.

Mme. de Luxembourg received her with joy; she was infinitely kind to her, and tried to make her forget her griefs and her husband's neglect by the constant affection she showed her. She made a little society for her, composed of the Comtesse de Boufflers, Mme. de Choiseul, Mme. du Deffant, and some other intimate friends. The Maréchale, who till Louis XV.'s death had played so conspicuous a part, had during the last few years seen her circle rapidly thinned; and in the Salon, once so famous, only the survivors of the old Court now formed a diminished group. In this choice but restricted society the two women lived with quiet dignity.

After this separation, Mme. de Lauzun had no further intercourse with her husband excepting on matters of business. Some little time later she sent him a memorandum relating to the arrangements to be made in the future, as a result of their separation, in the event of her inheriting property from any of her relations. The lawyer employed to treat with Lauzun constantly repeated in his communications this same formula: "Mme. de Lauzun's solicitor does not know why M. de Lauzun should do this or

that"—"Mme. de Lauzun's solicitor is surprised that M. de. Lauzun," etc.

The husband, irritated by this silly iteration, wrote to the lawyer: "M. de Lauzun informs Mme. de Lauzun's solicitor in the first place that he is an impertinent fellow, and in the second that he does not know what he is talking about, and finally, to be rid of him once for all, that he, M. de Lauzun, agrees with all his heart to anything that Mme. de Lauzun may wish, whatever it may be."

During these painful family quarrels Lauzun's friends took his part; those of the Duchesse on the other hand defended her with vehemence. She was in general greatly pitied as being the innocent victim of her husband's prodigality.

Lauzun's friends, however, thought it incumbent on them to defend him, and they sometimes did it with an energy and virulence which raised a tornado. Thus Mme. de Guéménée, in a moment of vindictiveness, so far forgot herself as to say that Mme. de Lauzun was a disgraced woman. This speech, maliciously repeated, roused all the family to such a point that the Duc de Choiseul, who was sincerely attached to his niece, determined to go and demand an explanation of the Princesse.

Being at Versailles in the month of January, 1778, for some Court ceremony, he requested an interview with Mme. de Guéménée and went to her the following morning. Here is their conversation as reported by Mme. de Gramont, who had it from her brother:—

"You know the ties which attach me to Mme. de Lauzun, and which her misfortunes have drawn closer. It has come to my knowledge that you said that you had *in your pocket evidence enough to dishonour her.* The idea distresses me deeply. The more positive the statement the more crushing it is. Can it be possible that Mme. de Lauzun should have deceived her family and the world? It is on this point, Madame, that I have come to beg you to enlighten us."

"I see very plainly," said Mme. de Guéménée, "that this is to pick some fresh quarrel relating to M. de Lauzun's bargain with M. de Guéménée."

"It has nothing to do with that bargain; it concerns only Mme. de Lauzun, and your having said that you had in your pocket evidence that would dishonour her."

"But, Monsieur, what is the meaning of all this?"

"A little patience, Madame. Let us see what it is that dishonours a woman. She is disgraced—or dishonoured—for instance, not by having a lover, I suppose? But by having several at once, or in such rapid succession, that she cannot be supposed to feel any real attachment. She is dishonoured when she is rash in her choice, and flaunts them or throws them over without regard to decency; when she does not deserve to retain them as friends or acquaintances. This, Madame, does indeed disgrace a woman; but I can hardly believe that you ascribe such conduct to Mme. de Lauzun. You cannot

even suppose that she has a lover. Still, if you have the proof in your pocket—"

"It is not that."

"Again, a woman is dishonoured if she does not regulate her expenditure by her income, and buys things on credit; it is common enough I know, but it is none the less dishonourable, because it is unjust, and entails disastrous consequences—does it not, Madame? But I do not fancy that Mme. de Lauzun can be accused of that. Her grandmother gives her everything she can want—and besides, I hardly suppose that you have your pockets full of her tradesmen's bills.

"I know of only one other thing that can disgrace a woman, and that is lying; but the lying that is dishonourable is not, I may say, lying for the sake of an amusing story—that is wrong and silly, but it is not dishonourable; it is lying to injure another, to insult virtue in misfortune, to ascribe her own vices to those who have none. That, Madame, is what brings a woman to disgrace and dishonour, from which she can never rise again! But Madame de Lauzun talks so little and is so honest! It is not of that that you can accuse her."

Mme. de Guéménée could only find a few embarrassed words in reply; she could only criticize Mme. de Lauzun for having parted from her husband, thinking her to blame, and so forth. Finally Choiseul left her in triumph, saying,—

"I did not come here to defend Mme. de Lauzun, who is high above anything that spite can invent

against her; but I wished to make you feel that honesty, decency, and even self-interest, should have made you more careful."

If Choiseul was right to take Mme. de Lauzun's part against unjust attacks, he had every conceivable motive on the other hand, to be indulgent to his nephew's extravagant folly, for he was coming to the same, and even worse, straits. In fact, in spite of his years, he was not any wiser, and spent without reckoning, running daily into enormous debts.

He lived in the Rue de Richelieu, at Paris, in a mansion built for him by La Borde in the Maison du Châtel. He there received every Wednesday and Friday; from seven to ten in the evening there was a concert where the best musicians in Paris were the performers. The whole Court assembled at his house, where he also welcomed lawyers, men of letters, and men of business of the first class.

But the life of magnificence led by the Choiseuls after their return to Paris ended in a catastrophe. In 1784 their position was such that they were forced to sell their splendid hotel. Some time later they were compelled also to part with Chanteloup, and Louis XVI. was obliged to lend the former Minister four millions of francs to meet his most pressing calls.

CHAPTER X.

1778.

Lauzun sets out for Vaucouleurs—He takes a holiday and visits England—Preliminaries of the American War—Franklin in Paris—Lauzun recalled to Paris—He returns to London—Rupture with England—Lauzun goes to Ardres—Colonel of the foreign Marine forces—Nominated to go to India—Naval battle—Lauzun's last interview with the Queen—A visit to Hautefontaine—Mme. de Martainville—Masquerade at Court.

As soon as he had settled his private affairs, Lauzun, much depressed by all the mortifications he had endured, and saddened by the Queen's attitude, which he had been far from expecting, made up his mind to return to his regiment and live in peace, devoting himself to his military duties. So he set out for Vaucouleurs, the "dullest spot in all Champagne and, consequently, in the whole universe." His only amusement was to go from time to time to Nancy, either for military manœuvres, or for more frivolous reasons.

At this juncture he heard that the post of French Minister to Warsaw had fallen vacant. His desire to go to Poland was, no doubt, much less eager than of yore; but he lulled himself with

the hope that if he could sojourn there he would easily recover his former influence over Princess Czartoriska, and re-unite the ties of which the memory was still dear to him. He therefore wrote the following melancholy letter to M. de Vergennes, to solicit the appointment at Warsaw:—

"Vaucouleurs, July 3rd, 1777.

"Monsieur le Comte,—I hear that M. de Montmorin has just been appointed Ambassador to Spain, and that consequently he no longer can lay claim to the post at Warsaw. I venture to beg you to call to mind all you once did me the honour to say on this matter. The moment when the King must name his representative to the King of Poland cannot be far off; he would wish, no doubt, to send some one who would be agreeable to him, and to name the person he might select, if in all respects suitable. Pray, Monsieur le Comte, have the kindness to lay before the King the opinion you have of me, and to ask him, after receiving his commands, whether it would be fitting that I should approach the King of Poland, and request him to speak in my favour to the French Court. If the prejudice which you believe the King to feel against me proves stronger than the report you would be so good as to make to him in my favour, I request it of your kindness that you will let me know. I should then certainly never regret the fortune and time I might have spent in his service, since I should have displeased him, but I shall give up to peace and to

the comfort of doing nothing, in perfect independence, the rest of a life which I had gloried in devoting wholly to him."[1]

M. de Vergennes did not send a favourable answer. Disgusted with the service, and the injustice of which he was the victim, Lauzun asked leave of absence to go to see his friends in England, among others Edward Dillon, who had married Fanny Harland.[2] He set out in the month of September, 1777. A fresh grief awaited him; on landing he received news of the young wife's almost sudden death. Everything combined to harass him. Hunted by his creditors, blighted in his prospects, in his dreams of the future, even in the loss of those he had loved, he felt that fortune, so long favourable, had turned against him. He sighed for solitude to recover himself, and went to Bath, where he lived in complete seclusion.

Bath was a fine city of picturesque beauty; built in part on the side of a high hill, its splendid houses stood out against the sky with magical effect. From every part of the lower town beautiful views were to be seen. At the season when Lauzun went thither there were no visitors, and he could give free course to his plans for isolation and solitude.

It was while he was still there that he heard of a probable outbreak of hostilities between Russia and Turkey. He at once wrote to the Empress Catherine

[1] Foreign Affairs, England, 1778.

[2] See *The Duc de Lauzun and the Court of Louis XV.*, Chap. xxiii.

to ask her for employment, and she confirmed his appointment to the command of the horse which she had formerly given him. M. de Maurepas applied for leave for Lauzun to serve abroad, and the King granted it.

He was making arrangements to start for Russia in the course of December when he received a letter from M. de Maurepas. The old Minister told him that matters were looking badly in America, and desired him to remain in England, where he would ere long be required for employment.

Lauzun replied without delay: —

"London, January 23rd, 1778.

"Monsieur le Comte,—I received with respectful gratitude the letter with which you have honoured me, and the tokens of kindness which you never cease to bestow on me. I have the same wish as ever to go to Russia, but it must be entirely subordinate to circumstances, and to the faintest hope of proving my zeal in the King's service. You know, Monsieur le Comte, that danger and distance have no terrors for me. Here, there seem to be some fears of an expedition [French] to India; I have long been ambitious of being thus employed. I venture to urge this request if the occasion should arise. I would stipulate for no conditions; whatever you approve will meet my views. I only ask for some opportunity of justifying the interest you condescend to take in me."[1]

[1] Foreign Affairs, England, 1778.

What, then, was happening in America and in England?

An incident, most trivial in its beginnings, was about to rouse the clatter of arms, and it proved to be the prologue to a complete social revolution in the Old World.

England had laid on her North American colonies a yoke from which many of them were hoping to free themselves. In 1765 an Act of the London Parliament levied a stamp-tax, which the colonists refused to pay. A congress was held at New York in November to resist this exaction: the tax was repealed in the following year, but in its stead a tax was put on tea, which was not more successful in its working. Several English vessels with cargoes of tea having entered the port of Boston, about thirty of the residents, disguised as savages, got on board the ships and threw three hundred cases of tea overboard.

This, in its naked simplicity, was the act that led to the war.

The town of Boston and the neighbouring provinces rose in arms; England determined to reduce its rebellious colonies by force. The English troops were first defeated in April, 1775. Fired with enthusiasm by some small successes, the Americans chose as their leader George Washington, whose name was to become so famous, and they determined to break irrevocably with the mother-country.

On the fourth of July, 1776, Congress proclaimed the independence of the States of North America.

The news of these great events in America roused general admiration in France; the courage and daring of the "rebels" electrified men's minds, more especially those of the young, eager for novelty and fighting. All the nobility—and such was the state of the public mind that no one was surprised—took part with a populace in revolt against its King; every one loudly expressed sympathy with the cause of the "rebels." The Bostonians, who had given the signal for revolt, became in a single day the height of fashion. Whist was supplanted in every drawing-room by a no less serious game called Boston.

The American colony very soon perceived that they could not hope to shake themselves free by their own unaided strength, and they sent Doctor Franklin to Paris to interest the French Government in their cause. He arrived in December, 1776, with a small party of friends. He was a handsome old man, with a youthful countenance; he wore a sable fur cap which he never took off, and which fell almost as low as his spectacles. His dress was of rustic simplicity, that of an American farmer.

His appearance, which at any other time would have excited curiosity, and perhaps laughter, produced the wildest enthusiasm. No one else was talked of. Gowns, caps, stuffs, were all *à la Franklin*, the prettiest women of the Court and the town sued for the favour of being allowed to kiss him—and he, very gallantly, yielded to their wishes.

His friends were not less well received. All the world was crazy over the "rebels," especially the women; to wear a Quaker dress was enough to secure their good graces. They invented a new head-dress *aux Insurgens*, in which the struggle between America and England was symbolized by an ingenious allegory.

The Doctor, who lived at Passy, was desirous, although a Protestant, of presenting bread for the sacrament; he had thirteen *brioches* made—the number then of the United States—the first was stamped with the word "liberty;" they had a wild success and people almost fought for them. The little house in which he lodged became an object of pilgrimage; it was invaded by visitors from morning till night; the road was blocked with carriages; all Paris must do homage to the illustrious stranger.

Franklin's visit transported the aristocratic classes with joy, and without suspecting that they were undermining with their own hands the foundations of the old monarchy, they were ready to give the cue for the applause which welcomed the Doctor and his friends. All the young men of fashion only asked to fly to the support of the Americans; the representatives of the oldest families were ready to shed their blood for the rebels. Franklin was overwhelmed with applications to serve in the American army.

Joseph II. of Austria was more clear-sighted than the French nobility. During his stay in France he

replied very drily to a lady who was crying up the Americans, "My business, Madame, is to be a Royalist."

Under his apparent simplicity Franklin had great shrewdness. He arrived at Paris almost unknown, and managed so well that in a short time, notwithstanding the complaints of the English Ambassador, he was received by all the Ministers and making terms with them. He showed great art in utilising the ideas then current in France to the advantage of his countrymen.

At this moment there was general discontent in all military circles; peace had prevailed for many years, and the army only longed for some fighting. This further contributed to increase the enthusiasm in favour of the Americans. And then the French counted on some glorious revenge for the defeats of the Seven Years' War and the humiliating treaty of 1763. The American agents, on their part, were not satisfied with purchasing in France munitions of war, in spite of the prohibitions of Government and the expostulations of the English; they did all they could to induce French officers to go to America with or without leave. Several had gone already, but in secret, and their departure had not been observed.

The relations between France and England showed increasing tension, and it could plainly be seen that a rupture was impending. War had begun indeed in the papers and in the drawing-rooms.

In 1777 Lord Suffolk, in the House of Lords,

spoke in very offensive terms of the quality of the French troops. A few days later the Maréchal de Biron met Lord Stormont, the English Ambassador, in the great gallery at Versailles. "Write to his indiscreet lordship," said he proudly, "that there are in France twenty thousand gentlemen, and I glory in being one of them, who are quite ready to meet you half way, to teach your nation better to appreciate ours." This same Maréchal de Biron was the hero of an adventure which shows that the chivalrous spirit of the French had not decayed since Fontenoy. At this time Admiral Rodney happened to be imprisoned for debt in Paris. An English paper did not hesitate to say that we detained him because we were afraid of his skill. The Maréchal, indignant at such a suspicion, flew to Versailles and asked the King's permission to pay Rodney's debts. "I envy you for having thought of it," said the King. "It is worthy of France and of you." The Maréchal had brought the necessary sum with him; he hastened to the prison and released Rodney. This generous action was to cost France dear.

While the situation was thus growing more and more serious in England, the struggle was going on in America. After many vicissitudes of successes and reverses, the rebels won a decided victory. An English army commanded by General Burgoyne was surrounded by the rebel militia and forced to surrender (1777). The excitement in Europe was extreme on hearing of the triumph achieved by planters and farm-hands, whose military inexperience,

destitution and want of discipline had been so much laughed to scorn.

Lauzun wrote to M. de Vergennes from London, December 19, 1777 :—

"Monsieur le Comte,—The consternation is excessive here at the defeat of General Burgoyne. But the King of England maintains his opinion and his authority with the greatest firmness, and there will be no change in the ministry, it would seem. Preparations are being made, on the contrary, for continuing the American war with greater vigour than ever, and for making prodigious efforts to open the campaign of 1778 with a formidable force. New levies are to be raised in Scotland and Ireland; as they certainly will be insufficient, foreign troops are being everywhere inquired for, and there is much talk of a treaty with Russia. I have the honour to send you, Monsieur le Comte, a report on the present state of affairs ; it will show you that in my absence I am employed on the matters that interest you, and that if I have lost all ambition, I have at any rate preserved the desire to be of some use.

"You know, Monsieur le Comte, that wherever the King may order his army, to the Atlantic, to India, for or against the Turks, nothing will frighten me, and that I shall undertake anything with zeal ; but, if there is nothing that can be given me to do, I beseech you to relieve me from the dismal situation of a Colonel in time of peace, and obtain the King's leave for me to go to Russia. When once I am at Saint Petersburg the Empress will allow me to fight

in a campaign with her army, if, as I believe, hostilities against the Turks recommence next spring, and this would certainly be refused me if I asked it in France—I have no object in view but not to remain in idleness.

"I make bold to beg you not to order me back to Paris if I can be of use elsewhere. Excellent reasons make me wish to remain at a distance for some time." [1]

To occupy his leisure, Lauzun had set himself to study the colonial policy of the English, and he sent notes very regularly to M. de Maurepas and M. de Vergennes. In March, 1778, he laid before them a very full report of the state of the English defences at home, and in all the English possessions in the four quarters of the world.[2]

These reports at last made their impression on the Council of State; Lauzun was ordered to Versailles, he was listened to, and he even had several interviews with the King on this subject.

M. de Maurepas, who had a great affection for him, recommended him warmly to M. de Vergennes. They both begged him to return to England to watch the course of events, and they promised him that, if matters settled themselves, he should fill the post of Ambassador to London.

Before taking up his new office Lauzun had to endure a fresh mortification, and not the least bitter. It had always been understood that he was to

[1] Foreign Affairs, England, 1777.
[2] Foreign Affairs, England, 1778.

succeed his uncle, the Maréchal de Biron, in the command of the French Guard; Louis XV. had formally promised him the appointment, and though he had not been actually nominated to the reversion, that was solely out of regard for the old Maréchal. In March, 1778, Lauzun was distressed to hear that the Duc du Châtelet would take his uncle's post, and fill an appointment which had become almost hereditary in the family of Biron. Certainly his favour and his good fortune were quite at an end; fate pursued him with inexorable harshness.

He had but just got back to London when he heard, with deep regret, all the details of the ceremony of his fortunate rival's triumph.

The regiment of the French Guard had been enrolled by Charles IX., in April, 1563. The anniversary of the day was chosen for a grand review by Louis XVI. in the Plaine des Sablons. The weather was beautiful, and the heat extraordinary for the month of April. The Queen arrived in a magnificent coach, and wearing a dress that repeated the uniform of the regiment. The review was splendid, the crowd immense, and all went off as well as possible. The King granted the officers all that the Duc du Châtelet asked for them; he distributed two thousand crowns to the soldiers, and donations to officers of fortune. Then, turning to M. du Châtelet, he very graciously said: "I see no one who has been forgotten but yourself, but I believe I shall do you pleasure by granting you, from this time forth, the reversion of the Maréchal de

Biron's appointment as Colonel of the French Guards." [1]

Tents had been pitched on the plain and the Colonel-designate gave a dinner, which cost him more than a hundred thousand francs, to the King, the Royal Family, and the Court. That the rank and file should have their share of the rejoicings, M. du Châtelet gave them fifty oxen, and the King, on his part, sent a turkey, two fowls, and two bottles of wine for every four soldiers.

The grief and vexation felt by Lauzun on receiving the account of this ceremony may be imagined.

He was happily diverted from his dejection and gloomy thoughts by the mission he had to fulfil, and the sight of the preparations being made to fight the French, and punish them for what the English called their insolent provocations.

In fact, the successes of the rebels had tilted the scale in their favour, and public opinion asserted itself so resolutely as to be irresistible ; the French Government had to follow. In December, 1777, the preliminaries were signed of a treaty of commerce and friendship with the American delegates, and France soon after concluded a definite alliance with America.

On hearing this, the King of England flew into a violent passion, and bitterly reproached our Ambassador, M. de Noailles. This functionary had

[1] To avoid hurting the old Maréchal's feelings, M. du Châtelet had to be satisfied with the King's word; the reversion was not registered with the other gifts.

just received instructions to quit London without taking leave. Lord Stormont, Ambassador from England to Paris, received similar orders from his Government.[1]

The recall of the French Ambassador caused the greatest excitement in England, and Lauzun gives an account of it. At the same time he announces to Vergennes that he will prolong his stay so as to keep him informed and send him all the news. He writes on March 18, 1778:—

"I am not such a coxcomb as to believe that I have contributed to the present state of things, but it is a great satisfaction to me that I foresaw what you have carried into effect. Consternation is general throughout England; there is no misfortune that is not apprehended, and this nation, long blind to the position, at last realizes its horror, and foresees the disastrous issue without any remedy or consolation."

The greatest joy was felt in France at hearing that the independence of America was fully recognized. "It could not have been greater over our own salvation," wrote Ségur.

[1] He had the following strange announcement posted about Paris:—

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC.

As the English Ambassador is about to leave Paris, he begs all those who have any claims against him to call at once at the Embassy, and he hereby formally declares that he will admit no claims that shall not have been presented by the 20th of this month.

Paris, Tuesday, March 17, 1778.

Printed and posted by license.—LENOIR.

Franklin was presented to the King on March 20. For this occasion he consented to abandon his Quaker's costume and fur cap. He wore a suit of dull gold-coloured velvet, white stockings, his hair untied, his spectacles on his nose, and carried a white hat under his arm. The Comte de Provence, more clear-sighted than his contemporaries, did not share the general enthusiasm; he confessedly regarded the conduct of the American colonies as rebellion and revolt. When he heard that Franklin had been presented at Court: "Here is Mandrin come to great honour," said he. "Now it only remains to raise trophies to Cartouche Washington." [1]

Preparations for war were made on both sides. There was a plan for sending part of the regiment of French Guards to Dunkirk. M. de Monbarrey asked the Maréchal de Biron: "If I give you a fortnight's notice, can your regiment be ready to start?" "It is now one o'clock," replied the Maréchal, looking at his watch. "If the King commands it, his regiment of guards will march out in fighting order this afternoon at four."

Lauzun remained yet a month longer in London, in conformity with M. de Vergennes' instructions. But out of respect he sent to ask of his Majesty King George III. whether he objected to his presence there. The King sent him word with much kindness that he might remain as long as he chose; he invited Lauzun to ride out with him on the Richmond road,

[1] Mandrin and Cartouche were famous French highway robbers —(Translator).

on the following Wednesday at eight in the morning, to talk over events. The Duc attended punctually.

"The King came to meet me," he says, "and told me that he was glad to assure me of his interest and good feeling before I should quit England; that it rested with me to stay, or to return whenever it suited my convenience, if I had no fear of its doing me an injury in my own country; that I was too well known ever to be regarded with suspicion. He personally was much offended by the conduct of France, and saying it was perfidy, he spoke with so much heat that I had to remind him that I was a Frenchman. He ended the conversation by telling me that no one would be more agreeable to him than myself to discuss terms of peace, or as ambassador, when circumstances should allow it, and that he would then, with pleasure, take any steps that I might think necessary."

After this frank and candid conversation, Lauzun could not with any decency prolong his stay in England; he remained about a month and then set out for Dover, whence he sailed for France.

From thence, however, he wrote to M. de Vergennes:—

"Dover, April 4, 1778.

"Monsieur le Comte,—I could wish that my talents, as well as my zeal, might justify the honour the King does me in reading what I write, his kindness in being pleased and in permitting you to tell me so.

"I am leaving England with regret, and the orders you gave me to remain in London as long as I could, still further increase my grief at departing at a moment when I still might be of some use; but I did not think that I ought to wait to act till I was an object of suspicion, and by prolonging my stay, risk the confidence and consideration I enjoy here, which will some day perhaps not be lost to the service of the King.

"The Militia are called out, all officers are to join their regiments. I began to feel out of place among so many hostile uniforms. All the Ministers without exception have lost their heads. Each one has been dishonest as to the state of his own department, and is anxious to postpone the moment when it will be proved against him. They live literally from hand to mouth.

"I am sending a special messenger to receive your orders the sooner, and shall await at Ardres, with my regiment, the messenger's return. I shall not leave my regiment, where my presence is needful, unless I should be more usefully employed elsewhere in the King's service."

As he announced in this letter, Lauzun rejoined his regiment, stationed at Ardres, a small town near Calais. As war with England seemed inevitable, many regiments had been moved to the coast, and that of Lauzun among the number. Lauzun did not come from England unaccompanied; he had made the acquaintance in London of a certain Miss Paddock, and the lady's patriotism had not been so

ardent but that she had been willing to follow him to France. She brought with her a younger sister, a charming girl, whose grace and innocence Lauzun respected. He put her to school at Calais, and afterwards saw her suitably married to a man she loved. This good deed must be set down to the credit side of our hero's account, and was indeed rare enough in his life to deserve mention.

At Versailles, meanwhile, a thousand schemes of conquest were discussed, each day a new plan saw the light to be abandoned on the morrow. As men of courage and determination were indispensable, Lauzun's name was constantly mentioned, and he was spoken of for various expeditions. One day the talk was of seizing Jersey and Guernsey; the next, of taking possession of the Isle of Wight and Portsmouth, and destroying the chief depôts of the English Navy; then the Bermudas were to be taken, or St. Helena, and it was always Lauzun who was to be sent on such expeditions. Towards the end of May he was ordered to quit Ardres with his troops, and join the army at the Camp at Vaucieux. Hardly had he arrived there when he was bidden to proceed to Versailles without delay. He there learnt that a fleet was to be sent to the Indies to stir up a general revolt there. Lauzun was offered the second command of the army and he accepted it joyfully. He was also authorized to levy a corps of foreign soldiery four thousand strong, to be under his orders, and known as the Foreign Marine Volunteers. He resigned the regiment of Royal Dragoons, which

by his intervention was given to the Marquis de Gontaut, and he devoted himself to enlisting the corps of which he was to have the command.

While he was working energetically at this, hostilities had begun. M. d'Estaing was sent to America with a vast fleet. On one hand the Comte d'Orvilliers collected at Brest thirty-two men-of-war and eight frigates. The Duc de Chartres was in command of one division. When the fleet sailed out of port it was almost immediately met off Ushant by Admiral Keppel, who had come out to engage it. The battle was a hot one and many lives were lost; but not a ship was taken, and both sides withdrew without any decisive result.

The French fleet retired into Brest to repair damages, and the Duc de Chartres went to Versailles to carry the news of what the French accepted as a victory. After paying his devoirs to the King, the Duc went back to Paris; he was hailed by the public with acclamations. The Court and the town were in the greatest excitement.

This more than modest victory inspired M. de Maurepas—younger than ever and ready to laugh at everything—with this little satire: "Do you know what is a sea-fight? I will tell you. Two squadrons sally forth from two hostile ports; they manœuvre, they find each other; they fire guns, some masts are cut down, some sails are riddled, some men are killed, a great deal of powder and ball is consumed; then each of the rival forces retires, asserting itself master of the field; each believes itself the conqueror.

The *Te Deum* is sung on both sides—and the sea is as salt as ever!"

The enthusiasm which awaited the Duc de Chartres was of no long duration. The Prince was said to have misunderstood a signal instructing him to cut through the enemy's line, and epigrams followed hard on praises. The Prince had hoped to be appointed High Admiral, but the King refused to name him, and gave him nothing but a nomination to be Colonel-General of Hussars. The Duc de Chartres was rancorously offended by this affront.

A most unexpected event, which had been regarded as hopeless, became known in the month of April, to the great joy of the Court. The Queen was expecting an infant. This happy event made Versailles gayer and more brilliant than ever. As the Queen was compelled to lead a sedentary life, little agreeable to her tastes and habits, every kind of amusement was devised for her. A theatre was built at Marly to give her the pleasure of seeing plays. At Trianon, garden-fêtes and allegorical entertainments were arranged; there was singing and dancing, with the attributes of fecundity, of beneficence and of motherly love. Then coffee parties were invented; ladies and gentlemen met in the morning in déshabillé; etiquette was banished. They sat at little tables and asked for what they pleased. A fair was held in the park; the ladies of the Court held the booths; the Queen, dressed as a lemonade seller, had a coffee house; there were theatres and processions. This little amusement cost more than 400,000 francs.

So the war with England, it may be seen, made no difference whatever in the imperturbable serenity of this light-hearted Court, and money was still flung about in handfuls with the most engaging recklessness.

Lauzun, before leaving France to go so far away, perhaps for ever, wished to take leave of the Queen, whom he had not seen for nearly a year; he had been a long while absent, and since his return he had not visited Versailles. He thought, however, that it would be in bad taste to depart without bidding her good-bye, and he craved an audience, which was immediately granted. He told the Sovereign that he felt it due to the kindness with which she had formerly honoured him to announce to her in person his departure for the Indies with M. de Bussy. Marie Antoinette seemed greatly surprised, and even distressed; she tried to induce Lauzun to change his mind, but he replied that his decision was irrevocable: "No, Madam, that is impossible," said he; "I am bent on this course, whatever it may cost me to carry it out. I venture to believe that in such a distant land, my zeal and my small talents will find fewer adverse circumstances, and meet with more justice; that they will have less intrigue and calumny to contend with." The King then came in, and Lauzun withdrew, after a few usual compliments. That evening the Queen and Lauzun met at Mme. de Guéménée's rooms, for she was still in favour. The Princesse, who had an honest and sincere affection for Lauzun, had done everything in her power to induce him to change his purpose, but could not succeed.

In vain did she hold out hopes of a splendid career at Court if he would remain ; she begged the Queen to add her entreaties, but without effect. Lauzun, hurt by the Queen's coldness and almost neglect, after a period of such distinguished favour, made it a point of vanity to show that he asked for nothing, and could well dispense with royal condescension.

While all this was going on, Lauzun was not losing time. In less than two months he had raised, armed and equipped a splendid body of two thousand men. His reputation for courage and daring had brought him hundreds of volunteers ; men were eager to serve under him. In a short time his complement was made up, and with brilliant officers. All the companies forming the legion were concentrated on the Ile d'Oléron.

While awaiting M. de Bussy's departure, Lauzun, who had nothing to detain him in Paris, and who found there only subjects of vexation or discouragement, decided on seeking a little solace and true affection in the beloved precincts of Hautefontaine, where he formerly had spent so many delightful hours.[1]

For some years his constant journeys, the care of his regiment, and Court intrigues had kept him far away from that pleasing spot, which recalled to him perhaps the tenderest and most delightful scenes of his early youth.

He found at Hautefontaine all the party we have already spoken of in a former volume. There was the

[1] See *The Duc de Lauzun and the Court of Louis XV.*, chap. xxii.

kind Archbishop of Narbonne, always amiable and indulgent to human frailty ; Mme. Dillon, Mme. de Rothe and M. de Guéménée. They were all sincerely attached to him, all appreciated his worth, his warm and generous heart, his delightful wit. M. de Guéménée, bound to him by the ties of true friendship, could not bear to think of his going abroad. Mme. Dillon, who, though she had not been in love with him, had always preserved him in her tender regard, had tears in her eyes whenever she thought of the long voyage and the dangers that might ensue from it. All vied with each other in giving their friend the most affectionate consideration, in showing him how dear he was to them, and how deeply they were grieved at the thought of his departure. Lauzun, greatly touched by these tokens of friendship, felt his resolve melting and his courage paling in the midst of these many warm and loving hearts.

To divert his mind from gloomy thoughts, he found at Hautefontaine a certain pretty and charming Mme. de Martainville. Seeing all the rest of the company grow pathetic over the young man's fate, she thought that she too ought not to be indifferent to this handsome youth and the dangers he might run into ; she, like the rest, expressed her interest ; her heart was free, and she at once bestowed it on so amiable and unfortunate a gentleman.

Lauzun spent all the time he could spare at Hautefontaine. He never reappeared at Court but on one occasion, and that was in the month of

November, when the King gave a grand masquerade as a surprise to the Queen. Marie Antoinette had spoken the melancholy reflection: "The Carnival will be nothing to me this winter!" The King wished to give her an agreeable surprise. In twenty-four hours, and in perfect secrecy, by the help of the stores of the *Menus Plaisirs*, the whole Court was travestied and in masks. At eleven, the Queen, being asked whether she would like to see some masqueraders, replied, "With great pleasure," and the King at once came in, in his usual dress, followed by the Ministers and the gentlemen and ladies attached to the Court, all in splendid character costumes. M. de Maurepas appeared as Cupid and Mme. de Maurepas as Venus; M. de Sartines was Neptune wielding a trident; M. de Vergennes bore a globe on his head, a map of America hanging in front of him, and a map of England over his back; the Prince de Soubise was a Chinese Bonze; the Maréchal de Richelieu, as Cephalus, led in the old Maréchale de Mirepoix as a Huron Indian squaw; and the couple danced a minuet with as much grace and lightness as youths of twenty. The Duc de Coigny appeared as Hercules, the Maréchal de Biron was a Druid, and the Duc de Lauzun a Sultan. Other ladies and gentlemen formed quadrilles of Rabbis, soldiers, hussars, sailors, huntsmen, and so forth. All the pages were dressed as jockeys. When the clock struck one the King gave the signal for retiring and conducted the Queen to her room. Everyone was "refreshed" with chocolate and iced drinks.

This was Lauzun's last appearance at Court. The entertainment over, he at once took the road to Hautefontaine, to await, at Mme. de Martainville's feet, the call of glory to the field of battle.

CHAPTER XI.

1778.

The conquest of Senegal—Lauzun returns to Paris.

One evening, on reading in his rooms the "London Magazine," Lauzun learnt from that journal the state of the English possessions on the coast of Africa. The idea struck him that it would be an easy matter to seize them, and so to ruin an important branch of English commerce. Captivated by the subject, he took up his pen to draw up a proposal for destroying the forts on the Guinea coast, and the numerous factories which carried on an important trade; he proved to demonstration how easy it would be to snatch these ill-defended settlements from the English, and the great profit to be derived from success. The report finished, he took it to M. de Sartines.[1]

Some days after, in another audience of the Minister, he further insisted on the advantages of his scheme; nothing could be simpler than its execution. While the squadron sailing to India was taking in water at the Cape de Verde Islands, a few ships with

[1] This report is preserved among the National Archives, T. 1527.

Lauzun in command, were to be told off to seize the Senegal coast and the Gambia, destroying all the English settlements. M. de Sartines allowed himself to be persuaded ; it was agreed that Lauzun should have the command of the expedition, and that if M. de Bussy should not go to the Indies—for that matter was again under discussion—Lauzun was to return to France after the conquest of Senegal. Lauzun was to be commander-in-chief on land. The fleet was in charge of M. de Vaudreuil, and he was responsible for all manœuvres and operations at sea.

Lauzun and Vaudreuil were not merely to attack Senegal, they were to get possession of the coast as far as Sierra Leone, where the English had three important factories. Finally they were to drive the English out of Goree, which had been French, and transport to Senegal the garrison, the munitions and the negroes.[1]

Lauzun was full of joy and enthusiasm at the thought of getting away, and realizing at last those dreams of glory which he had so long had at heart. He set out in high hopes at the end of November, 1778, for the Island of Oléron, where his foreign naval volunteers had assembled ; the troops were a fine body and ready to embark. From thence he went to Landerneau. He had not been there more than three hours when a courier followed him from M. de Sartines, ordering him to Versailles. He was there

[1] These instructions are to be found in the National Archives, T. 1527, and in the papers at the Ministry of Marine, B^4, 149. They bear the date November 20, 1778. The instructions to M. de Vaudreuil are dated November 28, 1778, and are signed by the King. They are at the Ministry of Marine, B^4, 149.

informed that the idea of sending M. de Bussy to India was abandoned; but Lauzun nevertheless obtained permission for the Senegal expedition, and set out once more. As his mission was a secret one, and it was important that no one should have any knowledge of it, he travelled incognito as the Chevalier de Saint-Pierre.

After more than a hundred hours in a post-chaise our hero reached Morlaix, November 29. He there found the officers who were to accompany him—the Vicomte d'Arrost, Miewkowski, Robert Dillon and Sheldon. The two last were nephews of the Archbishop of Narbonne. They were to have embarked at Brest; but after various delays of no interest, Lauzun at last joined the fleet at Quiberon. The squadron was composed of the men-of-war the *Fendant* and the *Sphinx*, two frigates, three corvettes and a schooner. Lauzun and Vaudreuil were on board the *Fendant*. Before they set sail a courier brought the news of the Queen's having given birth to a daughter, December 19, 1778. Mme. de Guéménée, as governess to the Royal children, had taken charge of the infant princess, and her position at Court was more important than ever.

The squadron finally weighed anchor, December 25, 1778, and sailed for Senegal. Lauzun had not long been on board when he had the vexation of discovering that, from neglect or dishonesty on the part of the subordinates, nothing of what M. de Sartines had promised had been supplied; there was not even a pilot to steer them over the bar.

The voyage was without mishap. By January 1 they were in the latitude of the Canaries and spoke with a Spanish vessel. Lauzun could not let the occasion slip of sending his congratulations to Mme. de Guéménée, and more especially to the Queen; but, not to infringe his orders, which enjoined absolute secrecy, he sent his letters to be forwarded by the Minister of Marine.[1]

From the day when the flotilla reached the Senegal Lauzun kept a diary of events as they happened, till he found himself in France again. This diary cannot be quoted *in extenso* on account of its length and the technical character of the details, but we will give an abstract of the contents, and base our account of Lauzun's short campaign on this original and indisputable document.[2]

On Thursday, January 28, 1779, the squadron sighted the coast. The Marquis de Vaudreuil hoisted the English flag on all his ships, hoping that the garrison of Fort Saint Louis would take them for the relief they were expecting. At the same time he sent M. Eyriès, in command of the corvette *Lively*, to go as close under the fort as possible and make certain signals agreed upon, that pilots might be sent out to take the ships over the bar. The only response from the fort was a blank salute from a cannon. Next day, at three in the afternoon, the troops to be landed were placed in fourteen boats, and an attempt was made to cross the bar of the Senegal river. This operation,

[1] Ministry of Marine, B⁴, 149.
[2] The diary is preserved in the National Archives, T. 1527.

which would have been attended by great loss of life if the enemy had opposed it, was achieved with perfect success. Lauzun, with his aides-de-camp, Dillon, Sheldon and Miewkowski, were the first to pass in the launch of the *Fendant*. Vicomte d'Arrost immediately followed in that of the *Sphinx*. Some of the boats ran a little risk, but all got into the river.

Night meanwhile had come on, and the cold was so bitter that Lauzun made his men land in order that they might bivouac for the night and make fires. On the following day the fishing tribes of negroes, whose huts were to be seen along the river shore, came with great demonstrations of joy on hearing that the new-comers were Frenchmen; then came several chiefs to offer their services and to sell cattle; and finally an envoy from the King of Cayor, who sent his brother to compliment Lauzun, and begged to form an alliance with France. He was escorted by a numerous train of negroes mounted on horses and camels.

From the people of the country Lauzun received the strangest information. Only two days before his arrival the English troops, having mutinied, had driven the Governor of the Fort, named Fall, out of the place; they had killed or wounded many of the inhabitants who had taken his part and given the command to a certain Gilbert Stanton. It was also said that the mortality during the winter had been unexampled, that more than a hundred white men had died of fever, so that there were not above a score of English remaining in the town.

While Lauzun was hearing this, M. de Vaudreuil, who had returned on board, fired fifty shots on the fort; after returning fire the garrison hauled down their flag, and an envoy was sent out to parley with the invaders and propose the terms of a capitulation. Lauzun demanded the surrender of the garrison at the King's mercy. This was agreed to. The capitulation was signed the same evening, and Lauzun entered the fort at eight that night; everything there was in the greatest confusion, for during the mutiny the place had been completely pillaged. The soldiers and non-commissioned officers were transferred, as prisoners, on board the *Fendant*.

On Sunday, January 31, Lauzun attended Mass, escorted by all the French officers. The inhabitants showed the greatest pleasure at the restoration of the functions of the Catholic Church. The Duc afterwards received them, and confirmed in their appointments all who had shown any attachment to the French rule.

On the same day the frigates sailed with instructions to destroy every English settlement on the coast. Lauzun, following his instructions, gave the necessary orders for the destruction of Fort James and for evacuating the Island of Goree.

On Monday, February 1, the new governor received a visit from Sidi Mouctar, the chief interpreter to Alicury, the Moorish King, with whom the French bargained for cattle, slaves, and gum. He came to assure Lauzun of his chief's friendship, and his desire to live on good terms with the French.

To do honour to this Embassy, Lauzun would have offered him refreshment, but in view of the hard times prevailing, only sugar and water could be served. The Marabout who accompanied Sidi Mouctar was bidden to share this banquet.

The visit was, in fact, opportune, for the troops were in the greatest necessity; there were no provisions of any description in the fort; for five months they had been out of flour; their nourishment consisted of some remains of mouldy biscuits, millet-bread, and very bad water. "I owe it in justice to the King's forces," says Lauzun, "to state that no mark of impatience ever escaped them, though they lacked everything."

On Sunday, April 7, Lauzun had a solemn *De Deum* sung in the presence of the whole garrison. A salute of artillery was fired, and three volleys of musketry; then Lauzun had himself officially recognized as Governor in the presence of the troops. At this juncture, several boats conveying the men ran aground in crossing the bar, and were wrecked on the coast; a considerable number of sailors were drowned, and all the merchandise, victuals, medicines, and property were stolen by the negroes, of whom King Damel was the chief, he asserting that everything that came to shore, whether vessel, cargo, or fittings, was his by right.

Lauzun demanded an interview with Damel. It took place in a tent which the Duc had prepared for the occasion. The Chief appeared with his army, and a following of about two thousand men on horse-

back ; but all the time was spent in compliments and ceremonial, and it was impossible to get the King to talk of business. Damel dined with Lauzun ; he ate and drank in moderation, but the Queens he had brought with him absorbed great quantities of brandy.

Next morning at daybreak the "palaver" was held. For eight hours the Chief held out against Lauzun, who demanded restitution of all that had been stolen, and at last, under the threat of an immediate and ruthless invasion, Damel yielded. Immediately, and as a sign of rejoicing, the King and his favourite Queen drank off twenty glasses of brandy. Nor was this all. "The Queen," says Lauzun, "sent me as a present her favourite female slave, assured me of her liking for white men, and particularly for me ; she also gave me a fine ox. I responded to these attentions by sending her a drum, an instrument she dearly loves."

Next day Lauzun despatched the *Lively* to France, instructing M. d'Arrost to carry to the Minister the news of their conquest, and the official report containing the details here epitomized. We read in the last lines how modestly the Duc speaks of himself, and with what emphasis he supports the officers under his command, always effacing himself to give them the palm, and asking nothing for himself, but only for them.

"M. le Vicomte d'Arrost will have the honour of giving you this letter ; he is better able than any one to enter into all the details that may interest you ; it

is rare to find so much intelligence, talent and activity combined; to these he adds indefatigable zeal, and such patience as is of essential use in the King's service; he has been most valuable to me, and I part from him with regret.

"As to myself, Monsieur, you know that only my attachment to you brought me here; it is in perfect good faith that I say I have no pretensions to anything, and do not wish for anything for myself. Indeed I would perhaps rather obtain no favours than accept such as may be offered me. I confess that I set a far higher value on what kindness you may be able to do to M. Robert Dillon and M. Sheldon, my aides-de-camp. These two young men, charming fellows both, whose ardour and activity have contributed greatly to the rapidity of our operations, were entrusted to me by their relations, who are the best and most intimate friends I have in the world, and there is nothing nearer my heart than the pleasure it would be to contribute to their advancement and their military prospects. The only reward I wish for the difficult task I have undertaken, is that you should give M. Robert Dillon the rank of colonel, and procure from M. le Prince de Montbarrey a written promise of a colonelcy for M. Sheldon on the day when he is three-and-twenty. I beg you also to bestow the Cross of Saint Louis on M. Miewkowski, Captain of Hussars, my present aide-de-camp. This officer is a man of the highest distinction."

Lauzun also pointed out to the Minister what was

necessary to secure possession of the conquered ground—gunners, bombardiers, victuals, etc.

He wrote by the same opportunity to his father, to the Maréchal de Biron, and to Mme. de Guéménée.

If Lauzun could have heard the comments to which the reception of his dispatches gave rise he would have been bitterly mortified. His easy conquest was laughed to scorn, and that he should have had no greater difficulties was regarded as his fault. His own family only tried to decry his achievement, and M. de Choiseul, who stayed quietly at Paris, living on the fat of the land and plotting intrigue, thought it amusing to make fun of his nephew who was trying to be of use. Mme. du Deffant wrote to Walpole, March 21, 1779:—

"M. de Lauzun, with two ships and a very small body of troops, has taken your Senegal, which was your emporium for negroes; M. de Choiseul yesterday was telling us that M. de Sartines, reading the report of this expedition to the King, hesitated as to giving all the details. M. de Maurepas would not allow him to omit anything; the King was accordingly informed that the English garrison consisted of four men, three of them sick, and M. de Choiseul said that the one who remained surrendered, as it would seem with a good grace, and that no doubt he had been granted the honours of war. If, in the course of this exploit, M. de Lauzun should have discovered a few gold-mines, that would be as good a thing for him as any glory he is likely to have earned."

On March 2, M. de Vaudreuil, whose position was precarious, and who had more than four hundred sick on board, decided to sail for Saint Iago; he rejoined M. d'Estaing in time to take part in the capture of Grenada.[1]

When Lauzun had organized the colony he considered that he had no more to do in Senegal; he fitted out a merchant-ship with a flag of truce, to return to France with his prisoners. Before departing he wished to leave some money to pay the garrison and supply the colony for a little while; unfortunately the money he had brought with him was already spent in the King's service, and he had none left. He had indeed been provided with a treasurer, but the supply of treasure had been forgotten. The ingenious idea occurred to him to borrow of the English prisoners, who lent to him personally all they had.

He took advantage of the last days of his sojourn in Senegal to conform to his instructions by reinstating the existing forts; he had them repaired as far as possible, as well as the batteries commanding the bar, which were of the first importance. When he thought he had done enough to secure the defence of the country, and reorganized the administration, he placed the command in the hands of M. d'Eyriès,

[1] On March 1, Lauzun had from the Chevalier de Pontdevez news of the taking of Fort James on the river Gambia. The fort surrendered at discretion, the garrison consisting, however, of only three officers, twenty-eight soldiers and fifteen marines. M. de Pontdevez had also wrecked all the forts and English depôts on the Gambia and the Sierra Leone rivers.

in obedience to the instructions he had received, and set sail for France.

After a voyage of thirty-six days he reached Lorient, on Monday, April 19. It was high time, for there was neither food nor water left on board.[1]

[1] Lauzun was not alone in his desire to win laurels. Arthur and Edward Dillon, the Marquis de Coigny, the Vicomte de Noailles served under the orders of M. de Bouillé and M. d'Estaing. Bouillé conquered Dominica, and took the island of Saint Lucia by surprise. D'Estaing seized St. Vincent's and Grenada with three thousand men. (The islands were restored to England by the Peace of Versailles, 1783.) The Vicomte de Noailles and Arthur Dillon distinguished themselves greatly in the attack on the town. Dillon's arm was broken at the beginning of the engagement, but he fought on till victory was assured; his arm was badly set, and had to be broken again eight times.

When d'Estaing waited on the Queen for the first time after this campaign, he came in on crutches, accompanied by several other wounded officers, and the only thing she thought of saying to him was: "Monsieur le Comte, were you satisfied with little Laborde?"

CHAPTER XII.

1779.

Lauzun is ill-received at Versailles—A game at faro—Mme. de Coigny's generous conduct—Lauzun resigns his commission—He is appointed Inspector-General of Prisoners of War—Plans for invading England—Lauzun and M. de Vaux—Camps at Paramé and at Vaucieux—Returns to Paris—Intimacy between Mme. de Coigny and Mme. Dillon—Creation of the Lauzun Hussars.

As soon as he landed at Lorient, Lauzun jumped into a post-chaise and set out for Versailles to report the success of the expedition. When he arrived there the Court was at Marly; thither he went in hot haste. If he expected to be complimented on the way in which he had conducted the expedition entrusted to him, he was cruelly undeceived. The Minister received him very coldly, and the King scarcely spoke a word to him. The Senegal expedition had not been approved of, and its author was out of favour for having undertaken it.

The luckless conqueror had the grief of being even worse treated by the Queen than by the King. In the face of such notorious discredit courtiers could not hesitate. Lauzun found himself alone. He understood even more clearly the disfavour of which

he was the object when he perceived that his wife was the close ally of Mme. de Polignac, and of all the coterie who feared and hated him.

Notwithstanding the difficulties of the situation he determined to make head against the storm, and in the evening he appeared as a matter of course in the Queen's circle. They were playing faro. Lauzun, not to look too awkward, took his stand behind M. de Fronsac and staked a few louis; no one spoke a word to him, which was extremely embarrassing. The young Marquise de Coigny was sitting next to M. de Fronsac, but Lauzun scarcely knew her, and did not venture to speak to her. But the young Marquise was touched by the cowardly desertion to which Royal contempt had brought him; she presently turned round and addressed him, and continued talking to him. Moved beyond expression by this proof of courage, Lauzun immediately credited Mme. de Coigny with wit and much grace. Indeed, her intervention was salvation to him. He recovered his presence of mind, tried to be charming to the amiable lady, who had not hesitated to compromise herself for him, and succeeded. Then, having got into the vein and feeling himself supported, he mixed in the general conversation, addressed the Queen, and was so lively and amusing that Marie Antoinette could not hold out, and began to chat with him as in the high days of his favour. The end of the evening saw his triumph; he had recovered all his prestige.

He preserved a tender recollection of this evening

at Marly, which had ended so unexpectedly well. Mme. de Coigny, by her magnanimity, had struck him to the heart, and that impulse of compassion, which indeed showed a generous soul, was the first cause of our hero's last "grand passion." This charming lady filled his thoughts; he fancied he had never seen her like, nothing so perfect.

Who then was Mme. de Coigny, of whom we have not yet had occasion to speak, and who had given to the whole Court such signal proof of an independent and rebellious spirit?

Louise Marthe de Conflans, the eldest daughter of Louis Gabriel, Marquis de Conflans, and of Jeanne Antoinette Portail, was born in 1760. Her mother hated society; she never went to Court, and she inspired in her daughter, from her earliest years, tastes which led her to sympathize with the citizen class rather than with the nobility.

The Marquis de Conflans, her father, was remarkably handsome, distinguished and tall, and was skilful in all physical games and exercises. He was a man of rare acumen, a great deal of intelligence and wit, and excessively frank in his speech, but he paraded more vices than he really had; he was immoral on principle, and chose to set his face against everything that he called prejudice; he told lies without being false, drank hard without caring for wine, and was profligate without passion. This eccentric man was acceptable at Court without ever gaining anything by it; everyone spoke ill of him, and yet was delighted to see him. In excess, as in

everything else, he would never allow himself to be outdone. The Duc de Lévis has a story that, at a mess dinner, seeing an old officer of hussars empty a glass holding nearly a pint, he took off one of his boots and filled it with wine, which he drank off to the officer's health. The Comte de Lautrec had a wolf's cub to follow at his heels, by way of a dog; M. de Conflans at once procured a bear that had been taught to dance, and made it stand solemnly behind his chair, in a hussar's jacket, holding a plate in its fore-paws.

Marthe de Conflans all her life retained traces of the ideas inculcated in her infancy, and the examples she had before her eyes. In 1775 she was married to the only son of the Duc de Coigny. The story goes that at the time of the marriage several family supper parties were given. When they were being arranged the Duc de Coigny said to the Marquis de Conflans: "Do you know I feel very awkward."—"Indeed. Why?"—"Well, I never supped with your wife before."—"Faith! Nor I neither. We will go together and support each other." The anecdote suggests that of the executioner who, as he led a poor wretch to the gallows, said: "I will do my best, but it is only fair to tell you that I never hanged a man in my life."—"And I never was hanged before," said the patient; "but we will each do all we can, and get through it somehow."

The young couple had no affection for each other; they lived on terms of cool politeness, not however neglecting the rules of "good form"; for Mme. de

Coigny in 1778 had a daughter, Antoinette Françoise Jeanne, whom she never called by any name but Fanny.

The Marquis de Coigny did not present his wife at Court till 1779. She was soon a brilliant figure there, in spite of her youth. Tall and well made, her beauty was dignified and imposing, with an air of disdainful pride and arrogant self-will: "Hers was aristocratic beauty in its highest expression." Her wit was original, biting, and formidable, but she overflowed too with ingenious ideas, delicate judgment, and graceful speeches. Every one was repeating her retorts and sallies, and she at once made herself a position in society, and that a brilliant one. We have seen how promptly she had come to the rescue of Lauzun, whom she hardly knew.

Lauzun in his memoirs speaks of Mme. de Coigny in quite a different tone from that he adopts in regard to the other ladies of his adoration. There was an excellent reason for this; namely, that he wrote them for Mme. de Coigny to read. It was therefore quite natural that he should write but lightly of the other women he had loved—that could not fail to be agreeable to his new friend—and that he should on the contrary display a respectful reserve when she herself was in question.

It is indeed quite certain that he loved her as he had loved no other woman; his attachment from the first was both tender and delicate, and it endured for thirteen years; that is. till his death. Though for a

very long time Mme. de Coigny bestowed on him no smallest favour, not even a lock of hair, was his affection at all the less? Far from it. Between him and the lady there was a deep affinity of heart and mind; they were sister souls, understanding each other, and linked by the bond of delicate sentiment. And thus for years Lauzun, the professed *roué*, lived with no idea in his heart but a romantically pure affection for the woman to whom he dreamed of devoting his life.

Meanwhile Lauzun had had various interviews with M. de Sartines; the Minister gave him neither promotion nor increased pay, but he offered him a sum of money down, which Lauzun very handsomely refused. Indeed, he asked nothing for himself; he only demanded some recompense for his aides-de-camp. M. de Sartines had broken all his pledges. In spite of the most express promises, he had scattered in every direction the corps of Foreign Volunteers that the Duc had so carefully recruited. Lauzun, in his indignation, declared to the Minister that, though he made no complaints, at any rate he would no longer serve the King, and he sent in his papers. The King, however, refused to accept his resignation. "I intend that you shall be well treated and satisfied," he said to Lauzun, "and I shall give orders to that effect."

The Minister did indeed promise to Lauzun that he should be appointed proprietory and inspecting Colonel of a legion, consisting of eighteen hundred foot and six hundred horse; he also promised him

that he should be made permanent head of the first foreign cavalry regiment which might fall vacant or be incorporated by the War Department. This the Duc accepted.[1]

He begged, meanwhile, to be appointed Inspector-General of Prisoners of War. These prisoners were treated in France with extreme barbarity, and a considerable mortality was the result. Lauzun, touched with pity, wanted to remedy this state of affairs. The Minister shared his views, and gave him the necessary authority, not only to amend the condition of these unfortunate prisoners, but to check abuses and dishonesty.

While awaiting the moment when he must take up his new duties, Lauzun went to Hautefontaine; he was gladly welcomed, his return was celebrated with rejoicings, and pleasure at seeing a well-beloved friend lighted up every countenance.

Life at Court had not remained unaltered during Lauzun's absence. The Queen's enforced retirement had involved considerable changes. Before and after the birth of the Princess there were no balls and but little card-playing; but the Comte d'Artois had drawn on his fertile imagination for new amusements, and fresh means of filling up his useless existence. Among other occupations he learnt to dance on the tight-rope. He took lessons

[1] A decree of June 25, 1779, amalgamates the Foreign Marine Volunteers with the Volunteer Corps of Nassau; the Nassau regiment did not alter their uniform, but their buttons were changed, the arms of Nassau being replaced by an anchor.

of an acrobat named Placide, and performed sometimes to a select party.

As soon as the weather was warm the evening was spent out-of-doors on the terrace at Versailles. All the Court walked and sat there till one or two in the morning, listening to the bands of the French and Swiss Guards. The Prince de Ligne speaks of these pleasant and innocent evenings, which looked like an opera-ball: "We listened and conversed, we made mistakes and were mistaken; I often gave the Queen my arm, and she was charmingly lively. We sometimes had the band among the shrubs in the orangery, where, high up in a niche, there is a bust of Louis XIV. M. le Comte d'Artois would sometimes say as he passed, 'Good evening, grandpapa!' One evening I agreed with the Queen that I would stand behind the statue and answer him; but the fear that they might not bring a ladder for me to get down, but leave me there all night, made me give up the notion. There was often more Court intrigue than love intrigue in all this."

What the Prince omits to say is that all Versailles was at liberty to promenade on the terrace; ladies of the Court, waiting-maids, citizens' wives, women of the town, everybody in short, elbowing each other in the Park. The Royal Family mingled with this mob, and much annoyance ensued.

Subsequently, and again owing to the Comte d'Artois' inventive genius, these assemblies altered in character. Innocent games were introduced, a

throne of fern was made in an arbour, and they made-believe King and Queen like children. Then they played at cross-questions, at soldiers, at blind man's buff, and above all at *descampativos*. Paris adopted the mania, and the rage for playing soldiers and *descampativos* became general.

Mercy well understood how unsuitable and ill-considered these amusements were, how rash it was thus lightly to defy the suspicions of a disaffected public by lingering in the arbours of Versailles till two in the morning! The disastrous affair of the diamond necklace had its beginnings in this alone.

While Lauzun was away, Mme. de Polignac's influence, far from diminishing, had constantly increased. The Queen could not do without her favourite. "Alone with her I am no longer Queen," said she, "I am myself." At all times and in all places she loaded her with excessive marks of favour. She went every evening to her friend's rooms, where she received the King and the Court. The company met in a large wainscotted drawing-room at the further end of the Palace; in it there was a billiard table, to the right a piano, to the left a table for playing 'fifteens.' Here the evenings were spent. Very often the Queen dined with Mme. de Polignac, and, to make up for the increased expense, she added sixty thousand francs to her salary.

Mme. de Polignac was not, by nature, exacting. But she had about her a sister-in-law, the Comtesse Diane, an ambitious and greedy woman, who wanted to secure every favour for herself and her family;

then there was the Comte de Vaudreuil, drowned in debt, who took advantage of her influence to rob the treasury, and who made a scene when Mme. de Polignac was not prompt in acceding to his demands. The favourite at last objected so strongly that she was reduced to sobs when urged to take such steps. But she yielded at last, and the Queen, always kind and easily worked upon, seeing her friend in tears, at once took measures for checking them. Mercy declares that for four years the Polignacs obtained in salaries and in gifts more than 500,000 francs a year (£20,000).

Nor had the Polignacs alone grown in favour since Lauzun's disappearance from Court. A young Swedish nobleman, Count Fersen, had taken the place the Duke had left vacant; in a short time he had become a great favourite; nothing else was talked of at Court.

Count Axel Fersen was born at Stockholm in 1757.[1] On finishing his studies he travelled, as did every Swedish nobleman, through England, Germany, and Italy; he had then come to France, where he had been appointed lieutenant (supernumerary) in the Royal Bavarian regiment. He was tall and well-built; his features noble, aristocratic and melancholy, his temper romantic. "He had," says M. de Lévis, "more judgment than wit;" but he concealed "a burning soul under a mask of ice." He was very well received at the French Court. In 1779 he was

[1] His father was field marshal, and had been leader of the opposition at the beginning of the reign of Gustavus III.

high in favour; he was admitted to the Queen's most intimate circle; there were whispered rumours of assignations, of long interviews at the opera-balls and the soirées at Trianon; the Queen had been seen at the harpsichord, gazing at him while she sang the impassioned lines from the opera of Dido:—

How happily was I inspired
When I received you at my Court!

But to return to Lauzun, whom we left in pleasant retirement at Hautefontaine. He was about to begin his tour of inspection of the prisoners of war when he heard that an army was being assembled for the purpose of invading England. He at once applied to the King to be sent on active service, and was appointed to the vanguard under M. de Vaux, who was in command of the land forces. Two camps were formed, one at Paramé, in Brittany, and the other at Vaucieux, in Normandy. The enthusiasm was indescribable, the War Office was besieged by young men, by all the Court, eager to be shot at. It was thought the greatest misfortune to be left inactive in a garrison; every one thirsted for danger and glory.

M. de Vaux' forces, numbering only thirty thousand men, had an immense staff of officers. Here are sketches of some of the generals from Lauzun's own pen:—

"M. de Vaux was, as he always is, pedantic, dull and second-rate; under an affectation of authority the basest adorer of favour.

"The Marquis de Créquy, confidential aide-de-

camp to the Commander-in-chief, abetted him in supplying us with poisonously bad food, and spent the rest of his time in playing little ill-natured tricks, some of which were funny enough.

"The Marquis de Langeron, Lieutenant-general, was a loyally tiresome old fellow, great at small jokes. In asking you to dinner he would say: 'Will you come and share with me an egg carved for four on the back of a tin plate? If there is not enough, I will serve myself up in a dish.'

"M. de Rochambeau, Maréchal de camp, who was in command of the van, could talk of nothing but feats of war; he was always manœuvring and planning military dispositions on the field, in his room, on the table, on your snuff-box if you took it out of your pocket; he thinks of nothing but his business, and knows it wonderfully well.

"The Comte de Caraman, the trimmest of dandies, softly, and minutely particular, would stop a man in the street if his coat were buttoned crooked and give him some little military instruction with much interest; he always showed himself an admirable officer, full of knowledge and energy.

"M. Wall, Maréchal de camp, fed well, drank punch all day, always thought others right, and interfered in nothing.

"M. de Crussol, Maréchal de camp, had a crooked neck and not too straight a mind."

At Paramé the days were spent in drilling, evolutions, sham attacks and defence, landing from boats, and military reconnoitring. These manœuvres

were in fact great shows; spectators collected from all the neighbouring towns; fine ladies came even from Paris, and seats were reserved for them to look on in comfort. When there were no manœuvres, there was dancing. Mme. de la Châtre would come, Mmes. de Simiane, de Navaris, de Coigny, de Villequier and others. The men danced in boots, and in the evening capital suppers were given.

The thing most clearly proved by these performances was that France had no General officers; they all betrayed their extreme newness and ignorance.

All these elaborate preparations ended only in a huge bubble. M. de Maurepas had never been under any illusion as to the final collapse of M. de Sartine's project, and was always making fun of the invasion.

Spain meanwhile had formed an alliance with France to fight the English. The Spanish fleet of thirty-four ships joined the French, of thirty-two. M. d'Orvillers, at the head of this formidable squadron, sailed in pursuit of Admiral Hardy; but the Englishman evaded him very cleverly and retired into Plymouth.[1] M. d'Orvillers was about to blockade the harbour when a fearful squall dispersed the ships, and obliged them to make for Brest in all haste; he was glad to escape with no worse harm done. This, however, was not all; sickness broke

[1] A caricature represented M. d'Orvillers as a colossus with one foot on the Isle of Usshant and the other on the Scilly Isles, looking which way the wind was blowing, while Hardy's fleet sailed in between his legs.

out in the fleets; it was evident that no fighting could be done, and the allies separated.

While the English were conspicuous for the care taken of their sailors and the admirable standard of health that resulted, the French were no less neglected with fatal indifference, and were decimated by sickness. This was the reason why most of our naval enterprises failed of success.

Admiral Hardy's fleet was uninjured; it held the seas and put any attempt to invade England out of the question. The scheme had therefore to be given up; and the campaign announced with so much flourish, and prepared so elaborately, ended contemptibly enough. Indignation was general; the two camps rang with recriminations, and the Ministers were severely blamed. M. de Choiseul is credited with the bitter remark: "M. de Maurepas is, it must be admitted, a wise Minister; but his watch is six months slow."—"The Duc is right, perhaps," retorted the witty old man. "But then—his watch has stopped!"

The camps at Paramé and Vaucieux, being of no further use, were broken up in the month of November, and all the coming conquerors, who had seen their dreams of glory and battle vanish into thin air, made their way back to the capital somewhat sheepishly after their discomfiture.

On his return to Paris Lauzun renewed his acquaintance with Mme. de Martainville; and they often were together at Hautefontaine; but Mme. Dillon and she were no longer on very friendly

terms. On the other hand, Mme. Dillon had become very intimate with Mme. de Coigny, which sufficiently explained Mme. de Martainville's bitterness. She was, in fact, keen enough to understand that she was supplanted in Lauzun's affections, and she owed Mme. Dillon a mortal grudge for her politeness to her rival.

As a result of her intimacy with Mme. Dillon, Mme. de Coigny was soon a constant visitor to Mme. de Guéménée, and here too Lauzun frequently met her.

But Lauzun was now two-and-thirty, and no longer thought himself irresistible. He even went so far in his bashfulness as to forbid himself the pleasure of gazing at her and listening to her. At this juncture the idea occurred to him of strengthening the ties of affection which already bound Mme. de Coigny and Mme. de Guéménée, by arranging a marriage between Mme. de Coigny's sister and the Prince's son. He spoke of the matter to Mme. de Coigny, who was enchanted, and entrusted the negotiation to Lauzun. He had great influence over his friend Guéménée, and obtained his consent without difficulty. It was a splendid match for Mademoiselle de Conflans, for the Duc de Montbazon, who was but eighteen years old, was the future head of the house of Rohan.

Mme. de Marsan and the Cardinal de Rohan highly disapproved of the marriage and strongly opposed it, but M. de Guéménée left them to themselves; the ceremony was fixed for May 29, 1780.

Lauzun, who had been treated with such cruel in-

justice and ingratitude, at last obtained from M. de Sartines an appointment as Colonel-proprietory and Inspector of a corps of eight hundred infantry and four hundred cavalry, to be designated as "Lauzun's Foreign Volunteers." This new corps was enrolled by royal patent of March 5, 1780, and the same document disbanded the foreign marine corps of 1778.[1]

[1] The corps was to consist of five companies of infantry, two of fusiliers, one of grenadiers, one of artillery, and one of light *chasseurs;* and of two squadrons of hussars, each containing one company. The uniform was to be the same as that fixed by the regulations of September 1, 1778, for the foreign Marines. The hussars were to adopt the same uniform as that of the regulars. The staff of the corps included the Duc de Lauzun, Colonel-proprietory and Inspector of the regiment, with twenty thousand francs a year; Vicomte d'Arrost, Colonel commanding, with twelve thousand francs; Comte Dillon, Lieutenant-colonel, with six thousand francs; Comte de Podereczky, Major; d'Exclent, Captain of hussars; Le Loing, Captain of grenadiers; de Blondéau, Captain of artillery; de Trentinian, Captain of *chasseurs;* de Miewkowski, Captain of hussars.

CHAPTER XIII.

1780.

An army to be sent to America—Lauzun and his legion to form part of it—Fersen also joins—The strange adventure of M. Dillon—Across the Atlantic—A naval battle—They reach Rhode Island.

All this time the Americans, left to their own resources, saw their affairs looking but badly; the enthusiasm of the first outbreak was failing, and the rebellion was not making good progress. They reproached us, with justice, for having forgotten our promises and neglected their interests. In view of this position the Ministry at last made up its mind to act, and in the course of the winter of 1780 it was decided that an army corps should be sent to America to reinforce the troops of the Congress. As soon as it was made known, this news caused a frenzy of enthusiasm in the French nobility, always eager and valiant. The younger men especially, all holding rank in the army, could not contain themselves for joy at the thought of reaping glory at last on a field of battle. They asked nothing better than to leave home, pleasure, wives and

sweethearts, to rush into peril and danger. Lauzun, Fersen, the Dillons, Noailles, Ségur, and many more, vied with each other in imploring to be sent to fight for American freedom.

It was a strange and a new thing to see a despotic Government assisting a nation in revolt against its legitimate sovereign. But it was perhaps even more extraordinary to see the Government sending forth all its young aristocracy to imbibe notions of independence and liberty which they would subsequently import into France. The Royal personages were so completely blinded that, when La Fayette returned to Versailles in 1779, the Queen said to him: "Now give me some news of the good Americans—of our dear republicans."

The little French army was placed under the command of the Comte de Rochambeau. Lauzun at once craved the favour of being sent out with his little corps of volunteers; this was immediately granted, thanks to M. de Rochambeau's intervention. The Duc was to join his regiment at Brest. Before leaving he wished above all things to see Mme. de Coigny once more; but he would not go to her house. He fortunately met her at Mme. de Gontaut's; he asked permission to bid her farewell, and she laughingly appointed a meeting at the Tuileries for next day. She kept the appointment, but accompanied by her friend the Comtesse de Durfort. Lauzun writes of her with real feeling: "I understood that day how much I might love her, and ten times I was on the point of telling her so; at the

moment when we were parting, perhaps for ever, I felt that I could risk nothing by opening my heart to her. I did not value life, and she might have made it dear to me. But I dared not. The thing we feel most deeply is often that which it is hardest to utter."

Two days later Lauzun left for Brest. It had been settled that the whole expedition should assemble at Brest and sail on April 5. At first it was proposed to send as many as 12,000 men, to be augmented possibly to 20,000; but the figure was subsequently reduced to 7500. However, the transports were not ready; the resources of the navy had been exhausted in sending out a considerable force to the Antilles with M. de Guichen. The indolence and ineptitude of the officials were beyond anything that is conceivable. Finally, for lack of transport ships, hardly five thousand men could be sent off. It was determined that the ten thousand men left behind should form a second contingent, and follow the first as soon as possible.

A great deal of artillery was shipped, a considerable siege-train, victuals for four months at sea and as much on land; but the troops wanted for everything. In some regiments the men had neither stockings, shoes nor shirts; all these had to be provided. There was a great deal of bad feeling among them, and discipline was ill-maintained.

The fleet was commanded by Vice-admiral Comte de Ternay.[1] He wished at all costs to conceal his

[1] It consisted of seven line of battle ships: the *Duc de Bourgogne*, 80 guns; the *Neptune*, 74; the *Conquérant*, 74; the

departure from the English, for he knew that Admiral Graves was at Portsmouth completing the armament of a squadron expressly commissioned to pursue him and give battle.

Lauzun's foreign volunteers had gone to Brest with their officers in order to embark, but space was limited; for lack of room and to Lauzun's deep chagrin—for he was in despair at seeing his legion incomplete—it was decided that the two companies of fusiliers should be left behind to form part of the second convoy. The troops to go now embarked on April 5.

Among the officers who went with them may be named Comte Dillon, the Vicomte d'Arrost, the Baron de Vioménil, Chastellux, the Vicomte de Noailles, the Vicomte de Custine, the Duc de Castries, the Marquis de Deux-Ponts, the Marquis de Laval-Montmorency, the Comte de Saint-Mesmes, M. de Montesquieu, and the Vicomte de Rochambeau. Fersen, handsome Fersen, was also one of the elect. Perhaps it was prudence that bid him leave, to silence the rumours caused by his presence at Versailles. His departure was remarked upon. The Comte de Creutz wrote to Gustave III., April 10, 1779:—

"I confess I cannot help thinking that the Queen had a weakness for him; I have seen symptoms too certain to doubt. Young Count Fersen's conduct has been admirably modest and discreet;

Jason, 64; the *Eveillé*, 64; the *Provence*, 64; the *Ardent*, 64; the *Surveillante*, and the *Amazone*. There were transports besides, and the whole convoy made up thirty-four ships.

especially wise is his determination to go to America. By going away he has obviated all risk, but it evidently needed a firmness beyond his years to resist temptation. The Queen could not take her eyes off him these last days; they filled with tears whenever she looked at him."

When Fersen's departure was announced the Duchesse de FitzJames said to him: "What, Monsieur, can you bear to abandon your conquest?" "If I had made a conquest, I would never abandon it," replied the young man. "I go a free man, and unfortunately leave no regrets."

The Commander-in-chief, M. de Rochambeau, was on board the *Duc de Bourgogne;* Lauzun sailed in the *Provence.* All the preparations were made under great difficulties. Several transports ran aground by the blundering of the merchant captains, whose ignorance was complete; some of the vessels sprang a leak and were obliged to unload; the *Conquérant* even let in water and had to be pumped three times a day. There were a number of sick. The signal for weighing anchor was given several times, but it was always the moment seized for going on shore by the ships' officers, and even the commanders; they could not be got to sleep on board.

At last, on April 13, all was ready. Every one came on board, and anchor was to be weighed on the 15th. But the sea was rough, and the convoy, after getting to sea to wait outside for the fleet, returned to the harbour on the 17th.

At the last moment Vicomte Dillon, Edouard Dillon's brother, who was second in command of Lauzun's legion, was not to be seen. He had gone on shore in good health and spirits to put some letters in the post, and had not been seen again. The whole army could talk of nothing but this sudden disappearance; some with ill-nature accusing the young officer of cowardice; others, and the greater number, believing that he had met with some accident. Lauzun, who was much attached to Dillon, defended him through thick and thin, living, however, in mortal anxiety, till after three days' absence the colonel quietly came on board with a sword cut in his body and two in his arm. His absence was then explained.

On joining at Brest he had seen at a post-house a chaise which he had loudly and severely criticized; the proprietor of this vehicle, a retired gendarme, took offence at his remarks, and called him to account for them. Dillon politely apologized for his random remarks and each drew his sword. But the gendarme on arriving at Nantes boasted of having put to flight "a certain Dillon" who was on his way to embark with his regiment. This was reported to the Vicomte, who, taking his chance of what might ensue, followed up his adversary and wounded him severely, while he himself got three sword cuts. Dillon, who in spite of his wounds had ridden without stopping from Nantes, not to miss his ship, was put under arrest by M. de Rochambeau.

This adventure gives some idea of the importance

attached to such a point of honour, since it was great enough to make an officer risk being a deserter on the eve of a campaign.

The wind continued contrary till the end of the month. At last, on May 2, the fleet and convoy made sail. All the officers, with the exception of M. de Rochambeau and M. de Ternay, were in ignorance of their destination. On the 15th the fleet had not yet doubled Cape Finisterre, and already there was much to repair.

We will cross the Atlantic, making the long voyage in Lauzun's company ; will see what reflections were suggested to him and to his companions by the life on board, and the various incidents of the voyage.

The first thing that struck the officers of the army was the want of discipline among the naval officers ; it was beyond anything they had conceived of, and their pride, too, was unexampled and unjustifiable. "In this corps everything breathes jealousy and insubordination ; every one who has not begun as a naval cadet is hated and despised, and every officer in particular—even such as have most talent—is full of prejudices which could never be eradicated but by entirely reconstructing and reforming the corps." The captain and officers of the ship on which Lauzun found himself were full of perfectly intolerable and odious pride, airs and insubordination, and they would say the most incredible things: one of them said: "When a Minister dares to send us an order that does not suit us, we send it back and

do not obey it." In speaking of the supernumerary officers whom they had been obliged to engage M. de Basleroi said, to close a discussion: "Besides, gentlemen, though it may be to the interest of the State that we should have some, it is not to ours, so it is not to be endured." The officers, too, hated each other; those of Brest called those who had come from the Mediterranean "fresh-water sailors."

Was this insolence compensated for by solid knowledge? By no means. To give some idea of the ignorance of the naval officers on board the *Provence*, we need mention but two facts: one of them mistook a map of the Black Sea for that of the Mediterranean; another asserted that the Tiber passed the walls of Constantinople; he was with great difficulty made to understand that it flows past Rome, and discussed the matter for more than an hour before he would believe that this was true.

Life on board was fearful for the men; six or seven hundred of them packed into a small ship could scarcely move. They had bad sleeping quarters, breathed a poisonous atmosphere, and had only vile food to eat and water gone brown with staleness. They were devoured by "lice, bugs and fleas." The sick were at the mercy of an inefficient surgeon, who had not even the necessary remedies to cure them.

This is how they took their meals: "All these poor, ill-clad sailors collected in the galley aft, sat down on the ground, and the rations were served out in mangers, as if they were horses; five times a week

hard biscuit in the morning, sometimes uneatable, and a little wine; at noon much the same meagre repast, excepting that a little salt meat was added; at five in the evening some broth made of beans or of sour-crout. It would be far better to give them these vegetables separately, but this is not the custom on board ship—besides, it would give the officers some trouble; so they prefer not to think about it."

All kinds of amusements were devised to vary the monotony of the voyage. When the weather was fine a launch was lowered, and the officers paid visits to their friends sailing in other ships. Lauzun had with him the band of his regiment, and he gave a concert every day on board the *Provence* to his companions on the voyage. As soon as the instruments were heard the other ships approached. This was the chief entertainment, the only thing that brought a little cheerfulness into the life of these unfortunate beings during a long voyage, while sickness was beginning to reduce their numbers.

On June 11, a small vessel loaded with herrings, oil and biscuit, was captured. This was a great event for all the fleet. Each ship of war was licensed to send for a share of the booty; it was a horrible scene of pillage, and the men even fought with each other, drawing their cutlasses. In the heat of the fray a sailor fell overboard, and was saved with the greatest difficulty; of course he could not swim.

On June 18, an English corvette of eighteen guns was captured; the prisoners were completely stripped

of everything they had. The evening was fine and warm, and Lauzun's band played for the delectation of the fleet.

On June 20, the squadron was south-west of the Bermudas, when six English ships came in sight. All hands were called on deck. It would be a pity not to record here the short and suggestive address spoken before the fight by the Capuchin father on board the *Provence:* "You have an excellent captain who has given proof of courage and skill. Confess your sins; God forgive you all. Give no quarter."

The battle began. But at dusk, in spite of superior strength and favouring conditions, M. de Ternay refused to continue the fight. He allowed the enemy to get away, and held on his own course. This conduct on the Admiral's part led to vehement recrimination, and even to remonstrance on the part of the officers and men under his orders. It was asserted that we might have destroyed the English ships, and that the commander's incapacity had robbed us of a certain victory.

This criticism was utterly unjust. It was not generally known that M. de Ternay's orders were to avoid fighting on the high seas, and to escort his convoy as quickly as possible to America. If he had lost only a few hours his way would have been crossed by Admiral Graves' fleet, which was in full pursuit, and missed the French by only twenty-four hours.

This affair, which might have brought us glory, added to the depression which was gradually gaining

on the crews and soldiers. They had now been two months on the seas from Brest; victuals were running short, and becoming daily worse; the number of sick constantly increased—there were 250 down on board the *Conquérant*, as many on board the *Jason* and the other ships. Most of the cases were of scurvy.

M. de Ternay did nothing to keep up the men's spirits. Never was so gloomy an Admiral, or with so little initiative. He never spoke to anyone, and his dejection had at last infected the officers; they were all suffering from melancholy and ennui, and many of them were on the sick list.

On July 4, in the evening, two English frigates came in sight, and a few shots were fired, but again we avoided fighting. On the 6th, a transport, the *Jeanne-Marie*, was missing; it carried the cooks and bakers for the army.

At last, on July 7, land was sighted. All the captains of ships were assembled to hold council of war with M. de Rochambeau and M. de Chastellux; it was decided to disembark the men at Rhode Island.

On the 8th, another transport was missing in the fog, the *Isle de France*, with three hundred men on board from Bourbonnais.

On July 11 the fleet at length cast anchor in the roadstead of Newport. It was high time; the voyage had lasted seventy-two days, and neither food nor water was left on the ships. The number of sick was considerable, but above all the men were

wearied out: dulness and depression had broken the spirit of the stoutest.

The sight of land, the smell of earth, the hope of victory were enough to revive the spirit and courage of the young officers; and they were fated to want them more than ever.

CHAPTER XIV.

1780.

The Americans receive them badly—The camp at Newport—Depression of the troops at the delay—August 15—A visit from Indians—Rochambeau goes to see Washington—Life at Newport—Winter quarters—Lauzun and Fersen—Rochambeau returns to France—Lauzun is sent to Lebanon.

If M. de Rochambeau and his companions expected to be hailed with enthusiasm, they were soon undeceived. Hardly had the ships anchored in Newport roads when the General landed with his staff. He found no one awaiting them; the streets were empty, not a face was to be seen at the windows: the few inhabitants they met looked sullen and dismayed. Rochambeau and his suite had to put up at the inn.

This reception, so far from what they had looked for, threw the French into fresh depression. On the next day, however, Rochambeau saw the Governor of the town and the principal inhabitants. He explained to them that his little force was only the forerunner of a much larger army, that the King of France had determined to support them with all his power, and that, with his help, their ultimate success was certain. By degrees his hearers warmed up, and the

residents proposed to express their satisfaction by some display of rejoicing. In the evening the houses, streets and church-towers were illuminated, and there were even a few fireworks in honour of the French.

By arrangement with the Governor a place for a camp was decided on outside the town, so as to inconvenience the inhabitants as little as possible, and on the following day the troops were landed. The sick were carried to the hospital at Newport, and the sound marched to the camping ground, where they ran up huts.

But it was not enough to make a camp; it must also be placed in a state of defence. An attack from the English was to be feared at any moment, and during the first few days would infallibly have been successful; we had not more than four thousand men fit to put under arms, and many even of those were in a very poor state of health. It was therefore necessary to construct redoubts, and to fortify the island, to avoid the risk of serious disaster.

Rochambeau placed Lauzun in command of the coast, and of everything within shot of the spots where it was possible to land. Lauzun, without a minute's delay, set to work to construct defences for the part of the island under his command.

On July 21 an English fleet of twenty-one ships came in sight in the offing; the French were not yet in a position to make effectual resistance, and for some days they lived in great apprehension. Happily the English Admiral Arbuthnot was waiting for the

co-operation of the land forces before attacking the camp. When at last he did so, it was too late; Lauzun had erected so many earthworks and batteries that they afforded us perfect protection. But, though we were in a position to defend ourselves, we kept very slack watch, as the following anecdote proves.

On August 9 an English officer came off in a launch with a flag of truce, to discuss an exchange of prisoners. He got to the *Duc de Bourgogne* without meeting a single boat on the look-out, and without his approach being even signalled.

M. de Rochambeau, in anticipation of a probable attack, had urgently begged Washington to send him some militia to reinforce him in the fight; the American General had therefore drafted off four thousand men. "They are splendid soldiers, and all ready and willing," wrote Lauzun. "There are whole squads of negroes, and the outposts of black men with white shirts, such as they wear in this country, look exactly like the negro harlequins on the stage."

Rhode Island, in spite of the devastation of war, of ruined houses and forests felled, was a lovely spot; rye, maize, and every kind of corn grew and ripened wonderfully, and the trees bore much the same class of fruit as in France. All the men rejoiced at finding themselves in this Eden; but the heat proved excessive during the month of August, and our soldiers, unaccustomed to a high temperature, suffered severely.

The town of Newport, the only one on the island, had but two main streets; it had been a rather pretty and busy place before the war. Three-fourths of the

houses were small farms of most attractive appearance. Between Newport and the mainland the straits were quite a league across, and the passage was not always very safe. The horses were ferried over on large, flat boats.

The spot chosen for the French camp was healthy and well protected. The troops were obedient to very strict discipline, which astonished and rejoiced the inhabitants, accustomed as they were to be pillaged both by the English and by their own troops. Everything requisitioned was paid for at once, and in money. M. de Rochambeau was a firm and upright man, a great disciplinarian, and by his example and authority compelled every man to respect most scrupulously the rights, property, customs and practice of our allies. "Discipline was so well maintained that fowls and pigs roamed among the tents undisturbed, and there was within the limits of the camp a field of maize, of which not a leaf was touched."

The good conduct of the troops was all the more meritorious because they were far from content, they lacked most necessaries, and were very badly fed. It is difficult to form an idea of the reckless want of care with which preparations were even then made for distant expeditions.

M. de Ternay writes to the Minister of Marine to ask for wine and brandy: "The barrels shipped on the merchant transports not having been hooped with iron, almost all leaked." He applies for blankets, mattresses and clothing for soldiers and sailors. Most

of the men of the Picardy regiment have no breeches, no coat; nothing but an old cloak.[1]

M. de Rochambeau had brought gifts for the wild Indians from the King, and clothing for the colonists. Unfortunately, in the confusion of shipping, the bales had been badly made up and everything was missing.

In the country the distress was very great; the island had been laid waste by the English, who had held it for three years, and then again by the rebel troops. Paper money was at a discount of sixty per cent. Rochambeau paid for everything, even rent for the camping ground. But he had no money and was forced to borrow, for he could get nothing on credit. Fersen, in speaking of the colonists, says: "Their greed of money is unequalled: money is their god; virtue, honour—nothing in the world is of any account but the precious metal. In all the dealings we have had with them, they have treated us as foes rather than as friends . . . . They sell food to the English, who pay dear for it." This rapacity did not tend to make Rochambeau's situation less critical.

Meanwhile the second division of the army—for which they were impatiently waiting to begin hostilities—did not arrive, nor was there anything to suggest a hope that it was on its way. Rochambeau and his force were left absolutely to themselves; since leaving Brest they had had no news from home of any kind.

The General, fully aware of the insurmountable difficulties of his position, would attempt no action

[1] Ministry of Marine, B[4], 183.

till the second division should arrive. But weariness was preying on all, and inaction gave rise to dismal reflections. The officers could but wonder whether it was worth while to come from France to camp out for the fun of it at Newport. They had started for America to win laurels, and not to grow lean in a useless stockade.

Fersen echoes their feelings when he writes this delightful letter to his father:—

"You know the French well enough, my dear father, and what we call men of the Court, to picture the despair of all our young men of that class who find themselves compelled to spend the winter quietly at Newport, away from their mistresses and the pleasures of Paris; no suppers, no theatres, no balls; they are desperate; but they need only the word of command to march against the enemy, to comfort them."

Dejection fell on all. The season was advancing; it would soon be too late to undertake anything. They began to think that they must winter at Newport, and there seemed no worse fate possible. Their situation also was becoming more and more precarious. Sickness spread daily; it was ascribed to the foggy climate, which checked perspiration and caused inflammatory colds on the lungs. M. de Rochambeau, seeing with grief the disastrous effects on his little army, of inaction, discontent and sickness, tried by every means in his power to amuse his men and raise their broken spirits; unluckily amusements were few.

However, on August 24, the eve of Saint Louis' day, the forces celebrated the King's name-day. All the regiments turned out under arms, three volleys of musketry were fired, all the batteries fired a salute, and M. de Rochambeau reviewed the troops with General Heath, Military Governor of Newport. The Americans were much struck by the splendid drill of the French. The festival was continued on the morrow. A dinner was given to the Knights of Saint Louis. M. de Ternay gave a great dinner on board his flag-ship, healths were drunk to all the great powers, and salutes fired from every vessel.

On August 30, a deputation of thirty Indians came to pay their respects to the General. As a rule they wore no clothes, but in honour of the event they were in gala costume—a shirt, stockings and shoes. On entering the presence of M. de Rochambeau they wore only one shoe as a mark of respect. They were well received, in the hope of securing their friendship and preventing their allying themselves with the English. Presents were given them in the King's name, humble enough it is true, of a shirt and a blanket; but the gift was repeated each day. M. de Rochambeau invited them to a grand meal; at first they were astonished and embarrassed, but by degrees became quite at their ease, and smoked their pipes very happily. To avoid making them drunk, they had wine much diluted with water. The General had ordered for them some of the delicacies of French cookery. "Well," said he afterwards to one of the party, "have you had a good dinner?"

—"Very good," said the Redskin; then laying his hand familiarly on M. de Rochambeau's arm, he added: "but, believe me, all that was not to compare with the English cook we ate the other day."

After dining they visited the cantonments; all the regiments were marched past, but what above all else excited their admiration was a charge of Lauzun's hussars. When the Duke rode past at a gallop followed by all his men they yelled with delight, uttering cries "which were more like the howls of beasts than the voices of men."

One of the things that most astonished the Indians was seeing apple trees loaded with fruit overhanging the tents of the soldiers. They, living solely on rapine, could not understand such respect for the property of others.

In the evening they performed a dance before the officers. They might have been taken for wild beasts; hideous yells and howls preceded the dance; some beat the tattoo on a tub covered with a skin, for a drum, others rattled pieces of wood together; they thus excited each other while others executed steps and figures in time to the clatter.

On September 1 the Indians went to take leave of M. de Rochambeau. In the evening they were taken to see an acrobat performing on a tight rope, and this amazed them greatly. Next day they left to rejoin Washington's army. Everybody regretted their departure, for they had amused the men, and had afforded valuable entertainment, breaking the dull and monotonous life of the camp.

On September 8 a duel was fought about some trivial difference, between M. Dillon and the Vicomte de Noailles. M. de Noailles was wounded.

M. de Rochambeau was now very anxious to meet General Washington, and talk over the situation and the steps that should be taken. He proposed to meet him at Hartford ; he set out for that place, escorted by his son, M. de Ternay, Fersen, and M. de Damas. They thought the country they travelled through the finest in the world ; it was well cultivated, the landscape was picturesque, and the inhabitants seemed well-to-do.

The party met with a singular adventure. One night a wheel came off the carriage in which were Rochambeau and Ternay. Fersen went in search of a wheelwright ; at a distance of about a mile he found one, but he was ill with fever. To Fersen's entreaties he merely replied, "If you were to fill my hat with guineas you would not get me out of bed this night." The French General followed in person to beg the man to come to their assistance, but it was of no use. "Well," said Rochambeau, "all I can say is that General Washington expects me, and you will make me miss my appointment. You must be responsible to the country."—"Why did not you say so sooner ?" said the wheelwright. "If it is a matter of public service I will do it." He got up and went to mend the wheel, at the risk of his life.

Rochambeau reached Hartford on September 27, and there found Washington. The French officers had been very anxious to make the acquaintance

of the famous American General. He made the deepest impression on them and roused them to the highest enthusiasm. "He has the look of a hero," writes Fersen. "His face is handsome and majestic, but at the same time kind and benignant; his smile is pleasant, his manners are simple without being familiar." "Everything about him proclaimed him the hero of a republic," says Ségur; "he inspired rather than commanded respect. He modestly strove to evade the homage which it was a pleasure to pay to him; at the same time no one better knew how to receive and reply to it. He listened with obliging attention to those who addressed him, and his countenance answered before he spoke."

In the course of this conference with Washington, M. de Rochambeau positively refused to leave Newport before he was joined by the second division of his army. But it was agreed that if by October 15 he should have received no news of it, he was to send a frigate to France, with an officer charged to ask for reinforcements, and to explain to the Minister what superior forces by sea and land held the gallant little French corps in check.

It was on his return from this meeting that Washington discovered the treachery of General Arnold, who was plotting to surrender West Point to the English, with all the depôt of the American army. A few hours' delay and American independence would have been hopelessly at an end. Washington's army, between two hostile forces, would have been destroyed, and the French corps must

apparently have shared its fate. Arnold escaped to the English lines and became the most virulent foe of his countrymen.[1]

All this while the French forces were vegetating in the most odious and intolerable idleness. The enemy could be seen, but could not be got at. In another way, indeed, the service was hard and fatiguing, for watch had to be kept night and day, and the force was small. M. de Rochambeau found himself in a cruel dilemma. If he left Newport, the fleet would immediately be taken and destroyed. If, on the other hand, the fleet were sent off, the land force would be surrounded and attacked by superior numbers. So long as there were no reinforcements they could only hold on in this wretched position. All the army were miserably depressed, and M. de Ternay foresaw the moment when his fleet would be absolutely without food.

M. de Rochambeau made up his mind to send an officer home to lay the situation before the Minister. Since his arrival on the American continent he had received neither letters nor despatches, nor instructions of any kind. The other Generals all wished that he should send Lauzun, whose intimacy with M. de Maurepas might have been of great service. However, he preferred to send his son. He gave

[1] Till this time Arnold's conduct had been excellent, and in a previous fight he had been badly wounded in the leg. A story tells that later in the war, being in Virginia and closely pursued, he asked an American prisoner of war what his fellow citizens would have done to him if he had been caught. "We should have cut off the leg that was wounded in the service of your country," said the soldier, "and have hanged the rest."

him urgent letters to the Minister and the officials. M. de Ternay also wrote to the Minister a note of serious complaint. Lauzun, finally, pressingly insisted that the remainder of his legion, left in France, should be sent out to join him; he pointed out that his men were continually at the outposts and were harassed with fatigue, etc., and he ended by demanding fifty recruits to fill the places made vacant by illness and wounds.[1]

Pending the arrival of the young Vicomte de Rochambeau at Versailles, and his success in forwarding the cause he had gone to represent, the army went into winter quarters. Rhode Island, where the army was established, was well populated, the resources of society were not lacking; our young officers were invited to charming parties where the American ladies shone with grace and beauty. There were dances and suppers which delighted the residents and helped the French officers to endure the gloom of exile.

Lauzun was the idol of these meetings. Venturing to be somewhat bold, at least in speech, with one of the young ladies: "Your words amaze me, M. le Duc," said the damsel, "for I am told that in France you are married." "Married!" said the Duc with a laugh. "Yes . . . but so little—so very little that it is scarcely worth mentioning."

Lauzun, guided by his good star, found himself from the first in a very agreeable circle. Mrs. Hunter, a widow of six-and-thirty, had two charming

[1] Ministry of Marine, October 1, 1780.

daughters, admirably brought up. They lived in great retirement and saw no company. Lauzun, by some accident, had made their acquaintance immediately on landing in Rhode Island, and they took a great liking for the gay, witty and amusing Frenchman. He soon was a constant visitor at the house, and was treated as one of the family. He fell ill. Mrs. Hunter took him into the house and took the kindest care of him. Lauzun himself expressly says that he never was in love with the Misses Hunter; "but if they had been my sisters," says he, "I could not have been more fond of them."

The elder, without being regularly pretty, had a bright and intelligent countenance, and much grace in her movements; she also dressed very well. Her sister Nancy "was a perfect rosebud, her temper was cheerful, her face always smiling, and her teeth beautiful, a rare thing in America."

Mr. Champlein, a wealthy and influential man, had a rarely beautiful daughter; she had fine eyes, a pleasing mouth, a lovely complexion, a pretty figure and very elegant style; she dressed her hair with taste and spoke French well. Fersen was her particular admirer and paid her great attention. Miss Sprindly and Miss Silven were also much admired by the French officers.

And while speaking of the youthful beauties of Rhode Island we must not omit to mention the fascinating Polly Leyton. She was not to be seen at balls and entertainments, for she was a Quakeress, but she nevertheless made a great impression. "She is

the goddess of grace and beauty, Minerva in person," says the Prince de Broglie; "a masterpiece of nature."

"Never was there such a combination of graces and simplicity, of so much elegance and propriety," writes Ségur. "Her dress was as white as herself; the muslin of her full kerchief, the envious cambric which scarcely allowed me to see her fair hair, all the innocent embellishments of a pious maiden, strove in vain to hide an exquisite figure and conceal the most bewitching charms. Her eyes, like twin mirrors, seemed to reflect the gentleness of a pure and tender soul; she welcomed us with an artless confidence which delighted me, and the use of 'thee' and 'thou,' as prescribed by her sect, gave our new acquaintance the ease of old friendship. In our conversations the guileless originality of her questions amazed me.

"'Hast thou then no wife nor children in Europe,' said she, 'that thou art come from thy native land to make wicked war?'

"'But it is for your sake,' replied I, 'that I have come away from all I love, and it is to defend your liberty that I am fighting the English.'

"'The English,' said she, 'have done thee no harm; and as for our liberty, what concern is it of thine? It is always wrong to interfere in other people's concerns except to make peace and prevent bloodshed.'

"'Aye,' replied I, 'but my King ordered me to carry arms for him here against your enemies and his."

"'Well,' said she, 'if thy King bid thee do what is

unjust, and inhuman, and against God's commandments, thee should obey thy God and disobey thy King, for he is made King to save life, and not to slay. I am sure that if thy wife has a good heart, she is of my mind.'"[1]

From the time of their arriving at Rhode Island Lauzun had been on intimate terms with Count Fersen. So strange a thing is destiny! Thrown together by the chances of life in this remote solitude, they had grown into genuine esteem for each other, and had become inseparable friends. They had been mutually attracted by similarly romantic temperament, and many tastes in common, and they spent all the time together which was not claimed by their duties in the service. The conversations between two such men may be imagined; both noble, generous and chivalrous; both having felt an ardent devotion to the same woman. If we could doubt the loftiness of Lauzun's sentiments or the dignity of his character, these lines from his friend's pen would surely be convincing. How should Fersen, who lived with him almost exclusively for so many long months, have mistaken him, or cheated himself so greatly? He was the depositary of all his secrets, he heard all the griefs, all the disappointments that

[1] During the American war a Scotchman, as Chamfort tells us, said to a Frenchman, as he pointed to some American prisoners: "You fought for your master; I for mine. But for whom were these men fighting?"

This is as funny as the story of the King of Pegu, who thought he should die of laughing when he was told that the Venetians had no King.

weighed on his mind, and this is what he says of him:—

"I am on the friendliest terms with the Duc de Lauzun. Opinions differ with regard to him; you will hear of him both good and evil; the former is right, the evil is in the wrong. If his detractors could know him, they would change their opinion and do justice to his good heart." Not long after he writes again: "I cannot tell you, my dear father, how greatly I am attached to the Duc de Lauzun, and how truly I love him; he has certainly the noblest and most sterling soul I know. I should never have done if I were to tell you of all the polite and delicate actions I know of him."

During their long hours of intimacy and conversation Lauzun had confided to Fersen the story of all his mortifications, and his determination to quit the service. Then one day, charmed by the young Swede's chivalrous temper, he offered to give up his legion in Fersen's favour. Fersen accepted the proposal with enthusiasm and wanted to come to some agreement with his friend as to the price he should pay; but at the first words Lauzun, smiling sadly, replied: "I do not sell men, my dear Fersen, "though I have sometimes bought them." Then, pressing his hand with affection, he added: "I, for my part, would rather pay to find a man to whom I can leave my corps, whom I love as if they were my children, in such perfect confidence as to you."

Fersen, overcome by so much generosity and magnanimity, threw his arms round Lauzun's neck,

and they both wrote to the Queen requesting her to use her influence that the transfer might be effected without difficulty.

In the month of November, as there was no forage to be had at all, M. de Rochambeau decided on sending Lauzun's legion to Lebanon in Connecticut, thirty leagues inland, where they were to spend the winter. It was not without regret that he left his friend Fersen behind him, and the amiable Hunter family, who had received and treated him as one of themselves.

At Lebanon, as everywhere else, he gained the liking of the residents by his delightful and elegant manners; he succeeded to admiration in all the business he was called upon to transact, either with the old Governor Trumboldt, or with other members of the legislative body of the State.

An anecdote is told of him, showing the natural affability of his character. A worthy American of Lebanon asked him one day what trade his father plied in France: "My father," said he, "does nothing; but I have an uncle who is a Maréchal" (a shoeing-smith), alluding to the Maréchal de Biron.—"That is well," said the American, wringing his hands as hard as he could, "it's a very honest calling," and the Duc gaily accepted the compliment.

Lebanon was not an agreeable residence; it could only be compared to Siberia. The town, one of the largest in the district, consisted of at least a hundred houses, but they were scattered far apart at distances of four or five hundred yards from each other, in

the heart of an immense forest. Lauzun faced ill-luck with a brave heart. He found his chief amusement in the Governor of the place, an old fellow named Trumboldt, extremely fussy and full of his own consequence. "He has all the simplicity of dress, all the self-importance, the pomposity which belong to the head of a little republic. The effect may be imagined when this little old man, in the costume of the early settlers in this country, bustles up to a table where a score of hussar officers are already seated, and without being put out of countenance or losing the rigidity of his demeanour, pronounces in a loud voice a long prayer by way of *benedicite*. Do not suppose that he excites the laughter of his audience; they are far too well bred; on the contrary, picture twenty *amens* spoken at the end from under twenty moustaches, and you will have an idea of this little scene."[1] Lauzun has endless stories of Trumboldt, whose whimsicalities he has wittily recorded and whom he loved to laugh at.

Happily for Lauzun he had many visitors. Chastellux several times spent a few days with him; the Duc indeed showed him some squirrel-hunts, a sport very popular in that part. These squirrels were much larger and had far finer fur than the European species; but, like them, they were agile in leaping from tree to tree, and then clinging so closely to the boughs as to be almost invisible. They were often wounded without being brought down; but that was a trifling difficulty. An

[1] *Souvenirs de Chastellux.*

obliging woodsman was called to bring his axe and the tree was soon felled.

During the winter the young officers travelled about for amusement. The Comte de Custine, the Vicomte de Noailles, the Comte de Damas and others went to pay their respect to Washington, and all stopped at Lebanon to spend a few days with their friend.

CHAPTER XV.

1781.

Mutiny in Pennsylvania—Death of M. de Ternay—Washington's visit to M. de Rochambeau—Arrival of the *Astrée*—News from France—M. de Montbarrey's place taken by M. de Ségur; M. de Sartines' by M. de Castries—Marriage of the Duc de Montbazon to Mlle. de Conflans—Death of Mme. de Mazarin; and of Lady Barrymore—M. de Rochambeau's return—The campaign of 1781—Lauzun's distinguished service—The siege of York (U.S.A.)—Cavalry encounter between Lauzun's hussars and Tarleton's dragoons—York capitulates—Lauzun is sent to Versailles with the news.

LAUZUN remained quietly at Lebanon till the beginning of January, 1781. On the 11th, General Knox arrived with a message from Washington, announcing a mutiny among the militia of Pennsylvania and New Jersey; they complained of being ill-fed, ill-clothed, treated too hardly, and above all of not getting their pay. The revolt had assumed serious proportions; the men had killed their officers, seized the field guns, and chosen new leaders by ballot.

The consequences of this outbreak might be disastrous, for it was known that the English General Clinton had made the most dazzling offers to the rebels if only they would serve under his

flag. Lauzun at once mounted and rode off to warn M. de Rochambeau of this serious affair. But it was not in the General's power to go to Washington's assistance; he himself had no money, and only procured food with the greatest difficulty.

Happily the mutineers repelled the proposals of the English with indignation, saying they were not traitors, but soldiers asking for justice. Congress intervened, did justice to the legitimate demands of the men, and all was quiet again. Washington wrote on this subject to Rochambeau: "I flatter myself they will continue to put up with the same inconveniences that they had hitherto endured, which I cannot help admitting to be beyond the limits of human patience."

Rochambeau took advantage of Lauzun's visit to send him to New Windsor with despatches for Washington. The American General welcomed the Duc cordially; he detained him for some days, explaining his plans, his schemes for the future, and promising him an important post as soon as military operations should begin. Washington, who was always obliged to employ an interpreter when talking to the French officers, was delighted to be able to converse with Lauzun in his mother-tongue; this knowledge of English might be of the greatest value to Lauzun, and do good service when the French and American armies should combine.

After a short visit, which Washington had done his utmost to render pleasant, Lauzun left the American head-quarters and returned to Lebanon.

His journey was not devoid of danger; he narrowly escaped drowning when crossing the North River; it was covered with ice floes carried down by the stream at great speed; it was soon impossible to steer the boat, which was evidently doomed to destruction. Happily for Lauzun an enormous floe lay at a short distance; he and his companions succeeded in getting on to it, and by leaping from one block of ice to another they at last reached the shore, but only with the greatest difficulty and at the frequent risk of their lives.

On arriving at Lebanon Lauzun found his legion in good order; but he heard of the death of the Admiral, the Chevalier de Ternay. The unhappy commander had died of grief: his men were almost naked, and he did not know how to procure food for them. To all his pressing applications and entreaties the Minister had not even vouchsafed a reply. Not a crown had been sent out, not a sack of corn, not a blanket. To be sure the land forces were in the same plight; it was ten months since they had left France, and not a letter had reached them, nor assistance of any kind. All M. de Rochambeau's demands and urgent representations had remained unanswered.

It is impossible not to be amazed by such utter neglect. It would seem that once out of sight the little army was completely out of mind. At Court and in the Government Offices no one had a care or a thought for their fate.

After spending some days at Lebanon, and having taken proper measures for regular supplies to reach his men, Lauzun placed the command in the hands of M. d'Arrost and returned to Newport for the rest of the winter, attracted thither by the pleasant society of which we have spoken. He had been there but a few days when General Washington arrived on a visit to M. de Rochambeau, and took the opportunity to review the French army. He came on March 6, and was received with the honours paid to a Marshal of France. He reviewed the forces and was present at the rejoicings held in his honour. This interview was really a great occasion to both the Generals; the French were all eager to see the hero of freedom. His noble presence, the simplicity of his manner and his gentle gravity, surpassed general expectation and won him all hearts.

He left on the 13th and returned to head-quarters at West Point, whither, to do him honour, Rochambeau ordered Lauzun and some other officers to escort him. The first night they arrived at Providence; all the population had come out to meet them beyond the suburbs; a swarm of children carrying torches gathered round the General and his escort, echoing the acclamations of their seniors; every one wanted to touch the man whom they addressed in loud shouts as their father, and crowded about him till they hindered his progress. General Washington, much moved, stopped for a few minutes; then, turning to the French officers, he said: "We may be beaten by the English, that,

gentlemen, is the chance of war; but this is the army they will never conquer."

At last, in the month of April, a ship came in from France, the frigate *Astrée;* for ten long months the little French army had not had a word from the mother country. But the *Astrée*, unhappily, had not on board any of the assistance for which the General had so urgently begged—neither men, money, nor provisions.

However, the news was various and important. In the first place Maria Theresa had died on November 29, 1780, and her death had placed the French Court in mourning. Then the Queen was expecting the birth of another child. Finally, MM. de Montbarrey and de Sartine had retired from office.

M. de Montbarrey's downfall had been caused by the insatiable greed of his mistress, Mlle. Renaud, who blackmailed officers of every rank. She extorted money for promotions, for the Cross of Saint-Louis, for commissariat appointments. This woman was a disgrace to the Minister; an attempt was made to force him to get rid of her; he refused, and was requested to retire. His successor was the Comte de Ségur, and the choice was a very happy one. It was partly due to the Queen's influence; she was much attached to the Ségur family.

M. de Ségur, who had lost an arm at the battle of Minden, was the best of men and excellent company. His mind was solid and well-graced, and he was a master of every subject bearing on military matters.

Honest, loyal, and patient, he had all the qualities needed for reducing the anarchy he found supreme in the War Office. No man could carry to a higher pitch both physical and moral courage. Wounded severely on several occasions, he had faced death in battle with perfect composure. He was a man of character, and of noble character.

M. de Sartine's place was given to M. de Castries. If there was much to be done at the War Office, naval affairs were, if possible, in still worse confusion. Insubordination was more than ever rampant. It was carried to such a point that M. d'Estaing refused to take a command, saying: "A degree of daring, of which I am quite incapable, is indispensable for the conduct of a French squadron of ships."[1]

These changes in the Ministries of War and naval affairs were a real joy to Rochambeau and his officers; they hoped that the new men in authority would be rather more attentive than their predecessors to their duty towards the little French force abandoned on Rhode Island.

Lauzun had the satisfaction of finding in the *Astrée's* mail-bags several letters addressed to himself.

First there was one from M. de Maurepas. The old Prime Minister, in reply to his urgent demands,

[1] All the men hated each other. The pride and jealousy of the officers as regarded their chiefs were unexampled. They would obey no orders, and were indifferent to a repulse. A captain said quite unreservedly, in speaking of M. de Grasse: "That man must be made to feel all the madness, all the despair of a general who has no one to second him."

assured him that it was impossible to send him the rest of his legion; as he expressed in the bantering tone he was so fond of: "I have not been able to achieve what you wish. You had only the King and myself on your side; that is what comes of keeping such low company!"

A letter from Mme. de Guéménée announced her son's marriage to Mlle. de Conflans.[1] We have seen how greatly Lauzun was interested in this match, which was, to some extent, of his making. He was sincerely glad, regarding it as a link between himself and Mme. de Coigny. Then he was informed of the death of the Duchesse de Mazarin, the eccentric lady of whom we spoke in the former volume.[2] She was one of the handsomest and most profligate women of the Court, and though she was but forty-two years old, she had lived at least eighty-four. She had grown enormously stout, and was compared to the tun of Heidelberg, but she laced so tight that she died of it. "She will die to-night or to-morrow," wrote the Chevalier de l'Isle. "The worst of it is that she refuses the Sacraments." In fact, though the Curé of the parish went to her house several times, she constantly refused to see him. The family got him in by force to prevent a scandal, but the dying woman dismissed him without listening to him.

[1] Louise Aglaë de Conflans. Married May 29th, 1781, to Charles Alain Gabriel, Prince de Rohan-Guéménée, Duc de Montbazon et de Bouillon.

[2] *The Duc de Lauzun and the Court of Louis XV.*, chapter xxi.

By the same opportunity Lauzun also heard of the death of Lady Barrymore, the beautiful Englishwoman with whom he had been in love for a whole winter, and who, at a critical moment, had given him such solid proof of her attachment. She had died at the age of thirty of a cold on the lungs.

But what had become of the Vicomte de Rochambeau, who had been sent by his father in the month of October last to explain to the ministers the wretched position in which he found himself? The *Astrée* brought news of him; unfortunately, not very satisfactory news. The Vicomte had been well received, but when he attempted to discuss business he found no one to talk to.[1]

There the matter ended; no one troubled themselves any further about him or about America. The appointment of the new ministers made no difference in the situation. Nothing was to be done for Rochambeau's army; it must get itself out of the scrape as well as it could. The General was even refused the reinforcement of the second division, which had been waiting at Brest for the last ten months. The young Vicomte, in despair, sailed in the month of April, on board a frigate, the *Concorde;* he landed

[1] His arrival gave rise to this epigram:

Le roi demande à Rochambeau
" Qu'apportez vous donc de nouveau ? "
" Sire," lui dit-il à l'oreille,
" Mon père se porte à merveille."

His Majesty asked Rochambeau
" What recent news have you to tell ? "
" Sir," he replied, and whispered low,
" I left my father very well."

at Rhode Island early in May, and informed his father of his failure.

Rochambeau forthwith wrote to M. de Ségur this dejected letter, which, however, bears the stamp of great dignity.

"Newport, May 13, 1781.

"Sir,—My son has returned very forlorn to this country. Whatever may be the result, the King must be served according to his wishes, and I am about to begin this second campaign with all the zeal, I venture to say the passion, that I feel for his person and his service, doing my best with the very small means he places at my command."

The General communicated to Washington the decision of the French Ministry, and they prepared to commence operations. It was arranged that the French forces should advance as far as the North River and join the American army, and that the united troops should get forward towards New York as soon as possible. The French were in great joy when they were told that at last they were to be active, and leave the quarters where they had so long been pining.

The officers, no doubt, had some regrets at leaving Newport and the amiable residents who had received them so well; but they had left their country to gain glory, and not to linger in barren idleness; the idea that they were at length to measure themselves against the English filled them with joy.

The army quitted Newport in high spirits on June

12, and marched on in the most perfect order and discipline.

Lauzun and his Hussars covered their advance, and their duty was a hard one. There was no other cavalry corps, and they were at work without pause or rest. Lauzun was expected to do everything; he was pioneer, he protected the flanks and the rear, he kept the look out for fear of surprises, he escorted the baggage train; he was often required to make long reconnoitring expeditions; nothing could exhaust his energy or his desire to distinguish himself. The safety of the whole column depended on him, on his activity and constant watchfulness. He was fully aware of his responsibilities, and showed himself in every respect worthy of the General's confidence. Thanks to him and to his Hussars, the march, though not without risk, was accomplished without misadventure; the French and American armies were at last united, and encamped on White Plains, not far from New York, which was the point they aimed at.

On July 8, Washington reviewed the combined armies. He was highly satisfied, and addressed the men and officers in words of warm encouragement. On the 11th, he inspected Lauzun's Hussars and legion. He knew that their colonel had distinguished himself greatly on the march, that they had given constant proofs of courage and devotion, and done eminent service; he bestowed on them many compliments and praises. Lauzun was appointed to the command of the two corps of the vanguard, and was also

made Commissary-General for the supply of forage. Washington, appreciating his intelligence and indefatigable energy, intrusted to him several important reconnoitring expeditions; he acquitted himself brilliantly, and was always the first in the front when they met the enemy; he was always to be seen full of spirit, keeping up the temper of his troops by his own courage and energy; fatigue seemed to have no effect upon him. The campaign, however, was a hard one for him; he got no rest day or night. Washington on various occasions spoke of him and of his Hussars in the highest terms.

After lingering on White Plains for six weeks, the army marched on Philadelphia. Before reaching the town they had to cross frightful swamps, where they would certainly have been destroyed if the enemy had then thought of attacking them. At last, on September 3, they marched into Philadelphia, where they were hailed with enthusiasm. The French brigade was reviewed by Congress. At the moment when the troops marched past, the President asked M. de Rochambeau whether he would be expected to salute them or no. The General replied that when the troops marched past the King, his Majesty always kindly condescended to do so. As the same honours were paid to Congress as to the King, "the thirteen members composing it lifted their thirteen hats at each dip of the standard, and each official salute."

The regiment that was most admired was the Soissons brigade, with facings of rose-colour, and

wearing Grenadiers' hats with a rose and white feather, "which struck the beauties of the town with amazement."

Philadelphia was a large town of at least forty thousand inhabitants, and very gay. The ladies of the place inspired one of the young officers with the following reflections :—

"The ladies of Philadelphia, though their clothes are handsome enough, are not generally dressed with much taste ; their heads and hair are dressed with less grace and lightness than those of our French ladies. Though well made, they lack gracefulness, they courtesy badly, nor do they excel in the dance. But they know how to make good tea ; they bring up their children with care ; they pride themselves on absolute faithfulness to their husbands, and many of them have a good deal of mother-wit."

At this juncture news was brought that the French Admiral, M. de Grasse, had come to an anchor in Chesapeake Bay with more than thirty ships of the line, and that the Marquis de Saint-Simon had landed at the head of three thousand men of the land-force. This unexpected reinforcement made Rochambeau decide on an attack on the English General Lord Cornwallis, who held Yorktown with a detachment cut off from the main army of the English.

Cornwallis, awaiting reinforcement, had entrenched himself in York ; the town was cut into two parts by the York river ; one, on the right bank was called York, that on the left shore was known as Gloucester and was fortified as an outwork. The English General

had barred the river with moored ships and some sunken craft.

The town was almost entirely protected by swamps, and was defended by trenches and palisades covering a fort with bastions and two redoubts with a wide abattis in front of them.

Washington and Rochambeau sat down before York, while Lauzun and M. de Choisy were sent to blockade Gloucester. Three thousand Militia had taken up a position in front of Gloucester, under the command of General Weedon. This officer had been an innkeeper who, in the course of events, had risen to be a general.[1] He was a very good man, but had no love of war, and still less of cannon shots. He allowed Lauzun to direct everything, and remained quietly in his own camp.

At the beginning of the siege Lauzun covered himself with glory in a cavalry engagement with Colonel Tarleton of the English Dragoons. Tarleton told all comers that he wished above all things to "shake hands with the French Duke." Lauzun soon gave him the opportunity he desired. The English cavalry was three times the more numerous; three times Lauzun charged with the greatest determination at the head of his Hussars; at the third charge Tarleton's Dragoons gave way, and, in spite of the infantry fire which supported them, Lauzun pursued them into the trenches of Gloucester.

[1] In the American army rank was conferred on all classes of men, or, to be accurate, the military profession was not a career; a shoemaker might be a colonel. The Americans often inquired of the French officers what business they followed in France.

Tarleton was severely wounded, and many of his men killed or taken prisoners.[1] As Lauzun was returning with his victorious troopers, he saw one of his Hussars, who had been left behind and was defending himself against two of Tarleton's Dragoons. Without saying a word to any one, Lauzun put his horse to a gallop, rushed down on the dragoons, beat them off with two sabre-cuts and rescued his man.

This brilliant skirmish, in which the Duc had shown so much courage, was immensely talked about at the time; it is still spoken of with respect in treatises on the use of cavalry.

As a result of this success the outposts were pushed forward to within a mile of Gloucester. In this new position the patrols were constantly firing at each other, and the noise was so great that Lauzun complained of being unable to sleep. The regular siege began early in October. During the night of the 6-7th, the trenches were opened above and below the York river. Washington's army held the right side of the trenches, Rochambeau defended the left and centre. A few days later an attack was made on the redoubts; more eager emulation, greater ardour and courage, and better discipline were never seen. The regiment of Gatinois Grenadiers, seconded by the Auvergne Regiment, was to lead the attack. M. de Rochambeau, addressing the soldiers, said: "My children, I hope you will never forget that we once

[1] Three captains of the legion were wounded, MM. Billy, Dillon and Dutertre. Robert Dillon and Sheldon distinguished themselves greatly.

served together in the brave regiment of 'Blameless Auvergne.'" The soldiers replied, that if the General would promise to get them back their old name, they would stand to be killed to the last man. And they kept their word, for they charged like lions, and lost a third of their complement. The King restored them to the title of "Royal Auvergne."

Comte Charles de Lameth was the first to leap the ramparts of the English redoubt, and received two severe wounds. The Marquis de Saint-Simon, though ill, was carried at the head of the attacking columns, and was wounded; so also was Comte Guillaume de Deux-Ponts. MM. de Lauzun, de Noailles, de Custine, de Chastellux, and Dillon covered themselves with glory.

The two redoubts were carried and occupied by the allies.

Lord Cornwallis several times attempted to make a sortie, but was always repulsed. The circle enclosing him drawing closer and closer, he proposed to capitulate. Lauzun was sent to treat with the English as to the terms of their surrender; he went forward alone, waving his white pocket-handkerchief. The chivalrous Duc de Lauzun did nothing like other men.

The garrison marched out, between the allied armies, with drums beating and carrying arms, which were subsequently piled, with a score of flags.

M. de Rochambeau was eager to inform the Minister at once of the success of the allied armies.

For this agreeable errand he chose the man who, from the beginning of the campaign, had always been the bravest and most zealous—the Duc de Lauzun. His choice was approved by the whole army. Comte Guillaume des Deux-Ponts accompanied him to give full details.

This is the letter written to the Minister by M. de Rochambeau :—

"Camp before Yorktown, October 20, 1781.

"MONSIEUR,—I have the honour of sending to you the Duc de Lauzun to carry to the King the news of the taking of Lord Cornwallis and his army corps. Comte Guillaume de Deux-Ponts is the bearer of a duplicate and of the list for honours. These are the two superior officers who have achieved the greatest distinction, as you will see in the journal, which will inform you of all the details.

"I have got over my fever, partly in bed, and partly in the trenches; but I desire nevertheless to have papers of leave in my pocket, in case my health should break down in the climate of this country.

"I hope His Majesty may give the Duc de Lauzun a good reception. The news of which he is the bearer is, I believe, of capital importance under existing circumstances. From the generals down to the humblest private soldier there has been, night and day, but one voice to do everything within possibility in His Majesty's service, and to en-

deavour to satisfy a master who is adored by this little army.

"I have the honour, etc.

"P.S.—We have 8000 prisoners, of which 7000 are regulars and 800 sailors; and 214 pieces of cannon, 75 of them of cast metal; also 22 flags."

Lauzun placed the command of his legion in the hands of Robert Dillon, and embarked in the royal frigate, *la Surveillante*, with the Comte de Deux-Ponts and some other officers who wished to spend the winter at Versailles, and return in the following spring, when operations should be begun again. After a voyage of twenty-two days they landed at Brest.[1]

[1] The year 1781 was a fortunate one for France. She and her allies had won several victories over the English; M. de Bouillé had taken the island of St. Christopher, and Barras that of Montserrat [both subsequently restored to England].—Admiral Don Salano and General Don Galvez had conquered Florida and taken possession of Pensacola. [Florida was ceded by Spain to the United States in 1820-21.]

CHAPTER XVI.

1781—1782.

Lauzun's arrival in France—Death of M. Maurepas—M. de Ségur's bad treatment of Lauzun—Mme. de Coigny and the Guéménées—"Perdita" in Paris—Birth of the Dauphin—The dinner at the Hotel de Ville—M. de Coigny leaves for America—Lauzun is ordered to rejoin his legion.

LAUZUN went straight to Versailles. No sooner had he alighted from his post-chaise than he presented himself at M. de Ségur's, and he, after a brief interview, took him to the King. Louis XVI. seemed to take the greatest interest in the young hero's narrative, and after congratulating him warmly, he desired M. de Ségur to conduct him to see M. de Maurepas, that the old Minister might also rejoice in this success.

M. de Maurepas was dying; however, Lauzun was allowed to see him. When the Duke was announced: "I am no longer of this world," was his reply. But he collected all his strength to receive him, and gave him a touching welcome; he desired, he said, to hear from his own lips the details of the French successes, and as Lauzun proceeded with his narrative, Maurepas said from time to time:

'Good, good!" But after saying this several times, he exclaimed, "I am dying, and I do not know to whom I have the honour of speaking."

On the following day he had again a few lucid moments, and took advantage of them to recommend Lauzun to the King and the Ministers, impressing on them that he should be liberally rewarded for all the services he had rendered.

M. de Maurepas did not recover; a very curious letter, written by Mme. de Coislin, shows with what sentiments courtiers looked forward to the approaching end of an old statesman.

"November 13, 1781.

"M. de Maurepas is going to die, gangrene has set in and the disease is incurable. There are great complaints that he is being left to die without the Sacraments, in the arms of his cousin the Archbishop of Bourges, and I have been told that Mme. de Maurepas has been urged to prevent such a scandal. The poor woman is to be pitied, and does more than she can; it is only since yesterday that we have ceased to delude ourselves as to M. de Maurepas' condition; and now there is already a sort of wish to be rid of him. We talk in a breath of his very near end, and of the ball to be given next month by the Body-Guards. What a country is ours! What friends, what hearts, what minds!"

M. de Maurepas died two days after.

His extinction made no serious difference to the State, but he had still kept the Court together,

which gave rise to the saying that when he died "the world lost more than he was worth." No one filled his place. Vergennes became the acting Prime Minister, but without having the title.

However, the news brought by Lauzun caused real joy at Court. The King showed genuine satisfaction; he saw Lauzun again and again, and asked him many questions—among others whether he proposed to return to America. When the Duc said that he should start in a fortnight: "You may assure my army," said the King, "that it shall be splendidly rewarded, better than any other has been yet. You yourself shall be the bearer of the honours."

M. de Ségur was present and undertook to have the lists made out without delay.

But Lauzun had no reason to be satisfied with the way in which he was treated. The Minister wrote to him that in consideration of his services he might keep up his regiment in time of peace on the footing of a Hussar regiment. This was rather less than he had been promised before the war, since he was to have had the command and profits of the first foreign regiment that might fall vacant or be created; nay, it was less than he actually had, since he was inspecting officer of his corps. Lauzun was deeply hurt by the injustice of which he was the victim.

M. de Ségur treated the American army no better. Lauzun, who had bowed in submission when he alone was concerned, was furious at the mean way in which his comrades' services were rewarded, and refused to be the bearer of such honours.

He had no better cause for satisfaction with the new Minister of Marine, M. de Castries. Instead of sending the four hundred men of Lauzun's legion, left at Brest, to America, he had despatched them to Africa, to Demerara, and to Annamboo, the most unhealthy spots on earth. M. de Castries did not bestow the smallest honour on Lauzun's regiment, not even on those officers who had most distinguished themselves.

The public were less ungrateful than the government. Lauzun could not show himself without being hailed with cheers ; but indeed this was the case with all the officers who had come back from the New World. This, then, was the whole outcome for our hero of his first campaign in America. Notwithstanding his zeal, his courage, his deeds of daring, a jealous fate seemed to pursue him and turn to ill everything that ought to have carried him to the foremost rank.

Let us see if his love affairs were more prosperous than his military career.

While he was fighting so gallantly for the "rebels," Mme. de Coigny had almost retired from Court. Only at rare intervals, when it was a matter of obligation, did she appear at Versailles or at Marly. On the other hand, since her sister's marriage to the Prince de Montbazon, she hardly ever quitted the Hotel de Soubise, the residence of M. and Mme. de Guéménée : there she spent her evenings in the midst of a delightful circle where her bright, refractory spirit had free course. She became more and more

intimate with those who were Lauzun's friends, and with whom she could talk in full confidence. Lauzun, who throughout his long absence had never ceased to think of Mme. de Coigny, found her more amiable and fascinating than ever; she allowed him to see the interest she took in him, and it was impossible to resist the feeling which attracted him to her.

"I never had met with so much wit," says he, "so many charms which were so wholly unlike the wit and charm of other women. I told myself that to love her was absurd, that it could only make me unhappy, but no happiness pleased me so well. I was constantly told that Mme. de Coigny was a coquette, that she was frivolous, that she would laugh most unmercifully at anyone who dared to love her. I was never for an instant frightened by all this; her feeling soul had struck me as quickly as her cleverness. I did not hope to attract her; if my heart were laid bare to her, she could only pity me. I kept my secret, but the idea of departure began to distress me, and she could have no difficulty in guessing the reason."

At this time a famous English actress arrived in Paris, Mrs. Mary Robinson, well known by the name of Perdita, as having been the mistress of George, Prince of Wales. She was wonderfully well received by French Society; fêtes were organized for her, entertainments to which the most illustrious personages accepted invitations. The Duc de Chartres, Lauzun, all the most attractive men of fashion about the Court, wished to make the fair

foreigner's acquaintance. The Duc de Chartres, who was seriously in love with her, got up some races in her honour on the Plaine de Sablons. He did more, he gave a garden party by night in the gardens of Mousseaux, which were magnificently illuminated. Coloured lamps, wreathed with leaves and artificial flowers, were disposed so as to figure on the trees the fair Perdita's initials. The actress was bright, lively, straightforward—a good-humoured child.

Lauzun having been introduced to her, as he could speak English, she was soon on very intimate terms with him. He laid himself out to attract, and being at the moment a kind of hero, everyone was praising his courage and doing him honour. Mrs. Robinson found him irresistible. Mme. de Coigny was far too clever a woman to be jealous, but his former acquaintance, Mme. de Martainville, made his intimacy with Mrs. Robinson the ground of a quarrel. On his return from America he found that this lady had broken with her friends Mme. Dillon and Mme. de Guéménée : this did not surprise him, as they were on very distant terms before his departure. But Mme. de Martainville desired that he too should give up the society of these two ladies. He absolutely refused, declaring that he was, and should always remain, affectionately devoted to them, that nothing in the world could make him give up his friends ; and he went more than ever to Mme. Dillon's. Mme. de Martainville was vindictive, and on hearing of his intimacy with Perdita she made a violent scene, which ended in a rupture. Perdita, however, was obliged

to return to England. She requested Lauzun to escort her to Calais, and he was too gallant to refuse. His feeling for Mme. de Coigny was, however, so completely a thing apart that he writes of her in these terms of devotion, as genuine as they are respectful :—

"I saw many men who admired her, and some were such as I might well be afraid of. I was well aware of my own disadvantages ; I had neither the grace nor the liveliness of youth ; but I had a heart that she knew well, and which had many points of resemblance with her own. . . . I was prudent, patient, ready to make any sacrifice rather than in any way compromise her ; and this was not thrown away on that heavenly nature ; she felt and rewarded it all."

Who can call the man a Lovelace who speaks in these terms of a woman he loves, and from whom he hopes for nothing ?

Meanwhile, he never went to her house and hardly ever saw her alone ; he scarcely dared to write that he loved her ; however, she allowed him to write, and when they happened to meet he would slip a note into her hand.

The position of the Guéménées, with whom Lauzun was so intimate, was more splendid than ever. The office of Governess to the Children of France, was no longer an empty title. The Princess, born in 1779, had, in accordance with etiquette, been entrusted to the Governess. From her infancy she was known as *La petite Madame*, and she had such a sad little face

that persons who were on terms of sufficient intimacy called her *Mousseline la sérieuse.*

On October 22, 1781, shortly before Lauzun's return from America, a Dauphin was born, to the great joy of the Court and country, and the child was baptized by the High Almoner, the Cardinal de Rohan. Mme. de Guéménée's duties were now of the first importance. They required her to sleep in the Prince's room; and she had arranged her bedroom in such a way that from her bed, through a plate of glass in the wall, she could see into the infant Dauphin's nursery; when what was called *le remuer* took place—the changing, that is to say, of the infant's swaddling clothes every morning in the presence of the physicians—thick curtains were drawn across this window, and Mme. de Guéménée began her night's rest. Until then, after coming very late to bed, she had remained awake reading and writing. In the summer she would often dine in her little house in the Avenue de Paris, and thither the children accompanied her. One day, when they were returning to the Palace with an escort of the body guard, someone rashly commented on this splendid display for a baby in swaddling clothes. Mme. de Guéménée replied very drily: "It is a matter of course since I am his Governess."

The Governess of the Royal Children could not sleep away from Versailles without a permit written entirely by the King's hand. She never asked leave but to go to Hautefontaine to see her husband and Mme. Dillon.

For many years M. and Mme. Guéménée had each led a most sumptuous existence. They had an immense fortune; still, considerable as it was, their regal grandeur, their excessive luxury and extravagance, had at last made serious inroads on it. The Prince's affairs had now for some little time been in great confusion; then, instead of paying the tradespeople and the actors, singers and musicians who came to his house, he thought it would be more economical to give them annuities. Then, he had borrowed at high interest or sunk his capital in life annuities; and numbers of people, attracted by his reputation and name, came to lend him their money. Have we not seen Lauzun giving up his whole possessions for an annuity for life of eighty thousand francs?

The Prince was far too fine a gentleman to trouble himself about his financial difficulties; he left the care of them to his steward, one Marchand. For his part he went on leading a reckless life, firmly persuaded that by one means or another Pactolus still would flow into his money-box. Was he not much too great a man by right of birth for it to be otherwise? The Princess vied with her husband in prodigality. She gave magnificent entertainments to which she invited all the Court, and in her dress she eclipsed all the ladies of Versailles. The social obligations of her office necessitated indeed enormous expenditure; and finally, being unable to pay everything out of her income, she, like her husband, met her difficulties by agreements for life

annuities, which accumulated till the day of the great crash.

The birth of the Prince, in October, 1781, was the occasion of universal rejoicing. All France testified to the Royal Family an affection which had never seemed more loyal and sincere. There were several grand entertainments; one especially magnificent at the Hotel de Ville, January 21, 1782. The Queen, after going to Notre-Dame and Sainte-Geneviève, went to the Hotel de Ville, where she was received by the Court. She was radiant with happiness. Lauzun was present, and so was Mme. de Coigny; Lauzun was cheered by the people, as were all the officers who had returned from America.

The dinner was splendid. Chance, so often kind to lovers, gave Lauzun the seat next to the lady of his present adoration. He took advantage of the opportunity to pay her court. Mme. de Coigny, who was beautifully dressed, wore a tall black heron's plume on the right-hand side of her stomacher. Lauzun, seeing this plume, either from mere fancy or some reminiscence, at once desired to possess it. Lover-like, he imagined it to be a talisman that would bring him luck. "Never," says he, "did a knight-errant desire anything with purer ardour." But Lauzun had turned so bashful that he dared not ask for it, for fear of a refusal which would have driven him to despair.

Just at this time M. de Coigny applied to be sent out to America. Mme. de Coigny was deeply distressed. Lauzun saw her tears, and it was a bitter

grief to him to see how truly the lady was attached to her husband. He was indeed compelled to defend her before others, for the couple had not been regarded as fond, and Mme. de Coigny's regrets were taxed with exaggeration, affectation and insincerity. It was even worse when she set out to accompany her husband to Lorient, so as to be with him till the last. The Chevalier de l'Isle accompanied them, and escorted the young wife back to Paris.

The world set upon her, attacking her with pitiless sarcasm. It was then that she wrote a note to Lauzun, beginning with these words, "Know how to defend her whom you so well know how to love." The injunction was not needed. Lauzun constituted himself his lady's champion; he defended her against every charge, in the face of every accuser, and so proclaimed to any who still were in ignorance the mad passion that possessed him.

From this time Mme. de Coigny, grateful for the devotion he had shown her, allowed Lauzun to call at her house. Before long he was a daily visitor, and they spent hours in a delightful intimacy. He also constantly met her in the drawing-rooms of Mme. de Guéménée, Mme. Dillon, and Mme. de Gontaut, and he would always be urging on her his passion and hopes; she listened amiably to his protestations, but never allowed him to cross the limit line of platonic sentimentality.

Lauzun was, none the less, very happy; merely to see her every day and constantly to talk to her seemed to him supreme felicity. Unfortunately

this charming existence could not last. At the moment when he least expected it, orders came to him from M. de Ségur to set out immediately and rejoin his troops in America.

CHAPTER XVII.

1782.

Lauzun sails for America on the *Gloire*—Mme. de Coigny's grief —A storm obliges the *Gloire* to put into Paimbœuf—Lauzun re-embarks on the *Aigle*—Detention at the Azores—Received by the French Consul—Visit to a Portuguese convent—A sea fight—Lauzun's illness—Arrival in America —M. de Rochambeau returns to France.

Lauzun earnestly wished that his departure might be postponed. His attachment to Mme. de Coigny was a very deep feeling, and he did not want to be sent to a distance from her. But the advances he made in the hope of procuring a delay were not well received by the Minister; M. de Ségur thought that Lauzun's prolonged absence could only be detrimental to the interests of the army, and he insisted on the Duc's immediate departure. Lauzun might, however, have brought high influence to bear and have procured a postponement; there was a general feeling of disgust at the way in which the Ministers had treated him. Moreover, the Guéménées urged him to remain for the festivity at the expected birth of an infant to the house of Montbazon.

But honourable motives led the Duc to submit to M. de Ségur's orders, and to set out at once, at

whatever cost to his feelings. "I was strongly tempted to remain for Mme. de Coigny's sake," he says. "For her sake I went." Fearing the keen eyes of the world, he thought his real reasons for lingering in France would become known, and he sacrificed his happiness to the good repute of the woman he loved. Mme. de Coigny was sincerely grieved at his departing; but even on the occasion of their last meeting, when taking leave, it might be for ever, the impassioned Lauzun could not conquer her dignified reserve. Still, he might carry away with him the belief that at any rate she shared his feelings, though he could wring from her no such confession. "The evening we parted," he writes, "I cut off a lock of her hair; she asked for it back, and I gave it up without hesitation. She looked at me as she took it, and I saw the tears in her eyes; all was not lost!" He was heart-broken at leaving her. "She alone could form any idea of my despair when I had to quit her presence; she alone could make me comprehend how miserable or how blest I could be. I came away; I never did anything so hard, my heart was full of love, despair, and trust in her."

Lauzun reached Brest at the end of April, 1782. He found several frigates awaiting him, and a numerous convoy of merchantmen and transport ships, to sail under their escort. There were also two battalions of recruits, intended to reinforce Rochambeau's army. On the very day when Lauzun arrived at Brest, an English squadron came in sight and cruised outside the roadstead. A convoy sailing for India

thought they might escape the vigilance of the enemy; they stole out, but were captured within twenty-four hours. This vexatious incident suggested greater prudence to the vessels still in port, and they waited for better times. This mattered the less as the wind was contrary.

Lauzun, far from fretting at this delay, was glad of it. Anything that could keep him near the lady of his love seemed to him a mercy from Heaven. He wrote to Mme. de Coigny by every mail, and these letters, full of burning love, carried her the expression of his tender passion. He tried to make them short, but could not succeed; words overflowed in spite of himself. Mme. de Coigny as regularly replied. "I lived on her letters," says Lauzun, "I never opened one without joy and gratitude beyond expression."

One day he implored her to give him that heron's plume which she had worn at the Hotel de Ville, the plume he had then so longed to possess, and to which he attached so many dreams of happiness. "I cannot possibly satisfy your wish," wrote Mme. de Coigny. "Some day perhaps I may tell you why." Lauzun was a good deal disappointed by this refusal, but he could forgive the hand that dealt the blow. "I was fully convinced that she was sorry not to give me the souvenir," says he; "still, I could not console myself for not possessing it."

At last the wind changed; but as the English squadron was still cruising in the roads, Lauzun was ordered to leave the convoy at Brest and embark

with the officers of his company on board the *Gloire*, a frigate of thirty-two guns. The chief of the officers about to join Rochambeau's forces, were the Prince de Broglie, son of the Marshal, Baron de Montesquieu, grandson of the author of *L'Esprit de Lois*, Alexandre de Lameth, the Comte de Loménie, and the Vicomte de Ségur, son of the Minister of War. All the young men of the Court, envious of the laurels their friends had gathered, were eager to set out for America; they all aimed at being "little La Fayettes."

Just as they were setting sail news was brought of the defeat of M. de Grasse. This Admiral, with thirty-three ships of the line, was escorting to Saint-Domingo some troops intended to reinforce the Spaniards. Admiral Rodney stopped the way. The struggle was long and terrible. M. de Grasse was taken prisoner and eight French vessels were seized. This was a fearful blow to our navy. But this disaster, far from quelling the spirit of the young officers, on the contrary inflamed their ardour. They all rejoiced in thinking that they were to sail with Lauzun. "It would be difficult to find a more delightful travelling companion," says Ségur; "his temper was easy, his nature generous, his charm quite original and to no pattern."

The signal to sail was at length given, and the *Gloire* weighed anchor on May 17th; a fresh gale was blowing, and they had good hopes of escaping the English. But they were hardly out of the narrows when a violent storm blew up, and the frigate was

in the greatest danger. At last she got out to sea. Unluckily the English caught sight of her and gave chase; she was forced to hug the coast very closely to escape the enemy. For four days they lived in this alternative of being taken, or of being wrecked on the rocks where the *Venus* had quite recently gone to pieces. "I confess for my part," says Lauzun, "that I should have been delighted to be taken. I should have seen Mme. de Coigny once more, and no war nor glory is worth so much as that."

His desires were not fulfilled. The tempest died away, but the *Gloire* had suffered serious damage, and was obliged to run into Paimbœuf. The officers on board of course made haste to land and run over to Nantes, to amuse themselves till they should be able to continue their interrupted voyage. Lauzun at once wrote to Mme. de Coigny to inform her of this happy mishap, and besought her to grant him an interview, were it but for half an hour, to see her once more and bid her a last farewell. He begged her to address her reply *Poste restante*, to Tours or to Orleans, whither he would go to fetch it. At the same time, though he asks the favour, he would not be importunate, and begs her to refuse unhesitatingly if she sees any objection to his request. "Ask nobody's advice," he says, "you alone can command me. Take the wisest course, even if it be the more cruel."

The Duc went to Tours full of hope. Nothing. He went on to Orleans. Nothing. He waited,

eating his heart out with impatience and uneasiness. At last came a note from the Chevalier de l'Isle, informing him that "Mme. de Coigny would be delighted to see him, but thought he would be wiser not to come to Paris; however, she left the decision to him."

This was a heavy blow to her lover. What! not a word, not a single word in Mme. de Coigny's handwriting! "It would have been so easy for her to refuse but to comfort me," he writes. "She would not even command me; she had not been kind enough to say 'I will not have it.' She employed a third person! She had not written to me, and this was more than enough to rend my soul. I have suffered many things, but no misfortune have I felt more keenly." The same obliging correspondent informed him that Mme. de Coigny had been at Versailles for a month, nursing her sister, Mme. de Montbazon, who had given birth to a daughter. He also said that as soon as the "little sister" was recovered, all the party—Mme. Dillon, Mme. de Montbazon, and Mme. de Coigny—would be leaving for Spa, where they expected to enjoy themselves vastly.

In sincere dejection under the shock of so cruel a disappointment, for more than a fortnight Lauzun did not write to Mme. de Coigny; at last, however, he broke a silence that was so painful to him, but he could not control his complaints and grievances. Her reply was mild and calm—she explained that she could not sanction an imprudence, but left him to infer that her sentiments were unchanged. And,

by degrees, peace was restored to the impassioned lover.

After a visit to La Rochelle, where he saw his old friend M. de Voyer, Lauzun returned to Lorient, where the *Gloire* was finishing her repairs. No sooner was she ready for sea than an order from the Minister sent him to Rochefort, to embark on the *Aigle*, a frigate of forty guns, which had on board 2,500,000 francs in coin for M. de Rochambeau. The *Aigle* was under the command of M. de la Touche, a well-educated man, brave, witty and amiable, but who had only lately entered the navy.

They set sail on June 14. Though the *Aigle* was much the faster ship, the *Gloire* had constantly to take in sail to wait for her. The officers wondered what could be the cause of so strange a state of things, when they noticed a merchantman sailing in the rear, which, as it could not keep up with a man-of-war, the *Aigle* had taken in tow. The mystery was soon explained. M. de la Touche had a mistress to whom he was greatly devoted; she had accompanied him to Rochefort. As the regulations did not allow of her sailing on board a ship of war, he had not hesitated, whatever might be said or thought of it, to freight a merchantman so that she might come with him to America. This encumbrance, and frequent calms, made their progress very slow.

One evening in the course of this interminable voyage, Lauzun, leaning against the bulwarks, was

chatting with M. Bozon de Talleyrand. They were discussing their friends in Paris, the absent world, and more particularly its absent wife, each giving free course to his thoughts, when Bozon suddenly and very innocently mentioned Mme. de Coigny. He praised her in the highest terms, and Lauzun was far from contradicting him; but Bozon presently hinted that M. de Chabot was very much in love with her, that she knew it, and had even given him many marks of favour.

This was a terrible blow. Happily the night was dark, Lauzun could conceal his feelings. Reflection, and his perfect confidence in Mme. de Coigny, presently soothed his mind; he told himself that she could not be so false and perverse; he went on writing to her, intending to forward the letter on the first opportunity.

One offered before long. Sickness broke out among the crew; some deaths occurred every day, and water was running short. They had been three weeks at sea and were only sighting the Azores. M. de la Touche decided that they must put in to Terceira, one of the chief towns of the Archipelago, to get fresh provisions.

On the day after their arrival M. de la Touche, escorted by all the officers on board the two frigates, went to call on the Governor; he was ill and not visible, but his son, Don José Mendoça, took his place and had the officers served with refreshments. To do honour to his guests he had dressed himself out in a most eccentric costume: an old scarlet coat,

worn threadbare but covered with gold lace, a huge and not less magnificent hat with a broad brim, a blue waistcoat with long flaps, and a pair of yellow breeches, making him look grotesque beyond words.

Don José, enchanted with the effect he produced, returned M. de la Touche's visit, accepted an invitation to dinner, asked for a drum to amuse himself, and to the great delight of the crew thumped it pitilessly for half an hour, saying it was his favourite instrument.

Terceira was a place of about twelve thousand inhabitants, of which six to seven hundred belonged to religious orders. "Devotion and profligacy are here mixed in a way as indecent as it is ridiculous," writes the Prince de Broglie, "and nothing is more common in society than to see the grossest flirtations of courtezans interrupted by genuflections and repeated crossing themselves as the Angelus rings." The men were supposed to be excessively jealous, and all the windows were carefully closed with shutters and iron bars.

All the officers from the Royal frigates, enchanted at finding themselves on land for a few days, hurried on shore to visit the town and the neighbourhood, each following his fancy or his convenience. The worthy Ségur thought he could not do better than call on the representative of his native country, and he persuaded his comrades to go with him. The French Consul's name was Perez. Having had occasion as a young man to go to Terceira on business, he had married and settled there. He was delighted to

see his fellow countrymen, and invited them to dinner.

The meal, though simple, seemed excellent to the young travellers: a very good joint, capital fish, delicious wine and fresh spring water, delighted them. To do honour to his guests Perez made his wife dine at table with them—an amiable native of the town of about five and thirty, and very dark, who had never in her life eaten in the presence of strangers. "Her glee was really touching," says M. de Broglie, "and she expressed herself entirely in Portuguese, which necessitated much vivacity in the eyes, both hers and ours." In this style of conversation Lauzun distinguished himself above his companions, and the Senhora Perez soon began to favour him with very languishing looks. After dinner the Consul led the party to a little house in the midst of a lemon garden, where they took a siesta, and where new milk and fruit were served. But the worthy Perez was a man of limited accomplishments, and soon bored his guests beyond endurance, particularly Ségur, for whom he took an immense liking, never leaving him for an instant. Lauzun, hindered by a sudden indisposition from leaving with his fellow officers, remained in the town with Mme. Perez.

In the evening Ségur returned on board out of spirits and tired, declaring that he would go on shore no more for so little fun, when he saw Lauzun looking, on the contrary, very content. He spoke to him of the little pleasure he had derived from his visit to the Consul.

"'I see,' said the Duc, laughing,[1] 'that you were not much amused; but it is your own fault. What possessed you that you should go to the French Consul? I went elsewhere and found a better way of driving out melancholy and gratifying my curiosity. Come with me and you shall see what is best in Terceira; good cheer, a hearty welcome, a merry host eager to please, smart and pretty women, obliging Sisters, coquettish school-girls, and a bishop who dances a fandango to perfection.'

"'You are mad,' said I. 'Who is this wonderful man who has displayed on a sudden so much active and obliging friendliness?'

"'The English Consul,' said he.

"'Why!' said I, 'what are you thinking of? We are at war with the English, and it is to their Consul's house that you go to take your pleasure!'

"'Wait a little,' said he. 'Do not judge too hastily. Mine host is to be sure English Consul, and our foe; but he has a plurality of offices, for he is at the same time Spanish Consul, and the Spanish are our own allies; and to crown all he is neither an Englishman nor a Spaniard, but a Frenchman and a Provençal.'

"'The only thing lacking,' said I, 'to combine in him every possible function is that he should be a familiar of the Inquisition.'

"'Well, my dear fellow,' said Lauzun, laughing, 'I believe he lacks nothing.'

"'If that is the case,' said I, 'I have no further

[1] It is Ségur who tells the tale.

objections to offer. Let us go and see this wonderful man who wears so many coats and plays so many parts.'

"So we set out: Lauzun, the Prince de Broglie, the Vicomte de Fleury and I, with two or three others of our fellow soldiers, and we were shown into the English Consul's drawing-room. He kept his word, for he gave us excellent tea, very good porter, a capital supper, a pleasant company of amiable women, and, as we were curious to see the fandango, famous for being the most gravely indecent and the most gloomily voluptuous of dances, a young Portuguese, coadjutor to the Bishop of Agra, was kind enough to perform it for us without too much pressing.

"The obliging Consul took us next day to a Convent, where we made the acquaintance of some indulgent nuns and very pretty school-boarders. Their complexion, though somewhat sallow, did not detract from the charm of their fine black eyes, their white teeth and their fine figures. Their appearance consoled us for the ponderous double grating which separated the parlour from the inner precincts. The Mother Superior, with a score or so of boarders, came solemnly to the inner grating, exactly like the pictures of abbesses of the thirteenth century, in costume, figure and face; nothing was wanting, not even the crozier, for she carried one in her hand with much dignity. After the first compliments, when the ladies had seated themselves, our encouraging Consul told us that we might flirt as much as we pleased, for that devotion and gallantry had all times

gone hand-in-hand in the cloisters of chivalrous Portugal.

"So each of us chose the damsel we thought most attractive, and who, as we thought, was most responsive to our glances; each had soon set up a flirtation, but very innocently and with strict propriety, in the presence of the double grating and the Mother Abbess. It may seem difficult to understand how, when the ladies knew nothing of French and we nothing of Portuguese, we could express ourselves at all; but nothing was impossible to our officious Consul; he undertook the part of interpreter.

"The signal was given by a young lady, the Senhora Doña Maria Emegilina Francisca Genoveva di Marcellos di Connicullo di Garbo. Struck by Lauzun's good looks, his intelligent face, and his uniform—that of a hussar—she smilingly threw him a rose through the gratings, asked his name, and offered him a corner of her handkerchief, which he caught, and which she then pulled tight as if drawing him to her.

"We all eagerly did the same; handkerchiefs were fluttered and flowers thrown on both sides, and as our young Portuguese friends seemed to long to get through the screen we felt bound to return the compliment by kissing our hands to them, not without some fear lest the Abbess should think us over bold. But the jest did not seem to disturb her gravity or be too much for her indulgence; so we continued to kiss the corners of the fair ones' pocket handkerchiefs, and they on their part kissed the end they had hold of.

"Presently the worthy Superior, observing perhaps that our pleasure was mingled with a good deal of surprise, made us a little speech, interpreted to us by the Consul. 'Pure love,' said she, 'was highly acceptable to God. These young persons,' she added, 'to whom I am permitting you to pay your court, having had this practice in pleasing, will by-and-by be more agreeable to their husbands; those who enter a religious life, having exercised the sensibilities of their soul and the fervour of their imagination, will love God all the more truly. On your part, such gallantry, which was held in honour of old, cannot fail to be useful to youthful warriors. It will fill you with the spirit of chivalry, and incite you to merit by noble deeds the hearts of the fair ones you love, and to do honour to their choice by covering yourselves with glory.' I know not whether the Consul translated her faithfully, but the fire of the Lady Abbess's eye, her dignity, her person and her crozier made me admire her eloquence, and convinced me that I was in some old enchanted island of Ariosto's in the good days of the Paladins.

"Thus encouraged, the handkerchief by which I communicated with the damsel of my devotion fluttered more than ever. She was not so rich in Christian names as some of her companions, for the Prince de Broglie's lady was Doña Eugenia Euphemia Athanasia Marcellina di Antonios di Mello. Mine was more simply named Doña Marianna Isabella del Carmo.

"Presently I ventured on a song, and then the

Prince de Broglie followed my example. Whether the words were improved or spoilt by the Consul's interpretation I do not know, but they were thought charming.

"It was by this time late; the Abbess gave the signal for retiring. We parted tenderly on both sides, and we were invited to return on the morrow. It may be believed that we were punctual.

"On reaching the Convent we found the grating decorated with flowers of all kinds, and the ladies more delightful than ever. They gave us some music, two of them singing very tender airs and accompanying themselves on the guitar. Meanwhile the damsels to whom Fleury and I had directed our attentions danced with us. So far as the melancholy grating between us allowed, we performed the figures which it hindered so much; but what was most amusing was to see the Lady Abbess beating time with her crozier. Then Doña Euphemia sang an improvised song alluding to the Passion and to her own for Lauzun!

"In love, as in ambition, it is hard to know where to stop. Their good-nature made us exacting. We asked for some love-tokens; our demands were gratified —locks of hair were passed to us, and scapularies that we laid over our heart. We, in our turn, made some presents—rings, locks of hair. Lauzun and the Vicomte happened to have portraits of themselves in their pockets, these they offered to the ladies of their choice. Marianna Isabella gave me a scapulary; she assured me it would bring me good luck, and that so

long as I wore it about my neck I should be preserved from accident and sickness.

"These platonic flirtations gave rise, we were told, to some dismay in the town; brothers, uncles, and lovers were alarmed. What might have come of it I know not; our romance would perhaps have ended in the old Spanish and Portuguese manner with drawn swords, for it is certain that as we went home we saw several men in long cloaks and slouched hats who seemed to be watching us; but be that as it may, the wind was rising, and M. de la Touche's prudence soon settled all hopes and all uneasiness.

"The signal for departure was hoisted, three cannon shot called us on board, and we only had time to go to say good-bye to our ladies, whom we found inconsolable. The parlour-gratings were dressed with wreaths of scabious, which they called flowers of regret. The good Abbess had a tear in her eye, and I even think that for the first time in her life she dropped her crozier. The señoritas gave each of us a pansy, which we pinned to our cockades, and a handkerchief wet with her tears. At last we got away, bearing their image in our heart."[1]

For some days nothing was talked of on board but the Lady Abbess and her pretty flock. Lauzun even wrote a little heroic play on the subject of this strange episode, which he called "The Duke of Marlborough."

In his Memoirs he devotes but two lines to this stay at Terceira: "I never saw stranger manners,"

[1] *Memoirs of the Comte de Ségur.*

says he, "or the love of God so queerly mingled with the other kind," and that is all.

If other proof were lacking, this of itself would be sufficient evidence of the authenticity of the Memoirs Lauzun wrote, as has been said, for Mme. de Coigny. He was not so simple, when he had just left her and declared himself dying for love of her, as to tell her the story of his flirtations at Terceira. Under any other circumstances he would certainly have delighted to record them. Ségur and Broglie had not the same reasons for discretion; it is from them—and their narratives correspond in every detail—that we know of the pleasant episode the young officers took part in at the Convent of that town.

Besides the 2,500,000 francs which the *Aigle* had on board, M. de la Touche was the bearer of despatches which he was only to open in the latitude of the Azores. He now obeyed these instructions, and opened the sealed orders. What was his dismay on finding that the utmost speed was enjoined on him? The despatches contained a plan of operations for a fresh campaign, and it was essential that M. de Rochambeau should receive it as soon as possible, as also M. de Vaudreuil, in command of our naval forces. M. de la Touche, in despair at his own conduct and delay, now cut off the merchant barque he had been dragging in his wake with the lady on board, and steered by the straightest line for the American coast.

Meanwhile the assertions of M. de Bozon had made a deep impression on Lauzun. As he lapsed once more into the dull routine of life on board, he brooded

over what he had heard; anxiety and distress and mortal melancholy took complete possession of him. He soon was obliged to take to his bed with violent attacks of fever and delirium. Fearing above all things to betray himself, he shut his cabin door against everybody but two English servants, who understood only a few words of French. While his illness lasted Lauzun's only thought was of Mme. de Coigny, and he wrote to her whenever the fever left him strength enough. This man, who had so often braved death, now would not die; he must once more see her he loved, he clung to life with all the strength of his will: "My mind supports me, I shall not die," he constantly repeated. And in fact the fever yielded.

He was still very ill when, in the neighbourhood of the Bermudas, on the night of September 4-5, they came up with an English ship of sixty-four guns—the *Hector*, recently taken by Admiral Rodney from M. de Grasse. Flight was impossible. The decks were instantly cleared; every man was up and at his post, snatching up his weapons; hammocks were rolled up, port-holes thrown open and guns run out for action. Lauzun was, by his own orders, carried up to the quarter-deck; utterly incapable of fighting, he was at any rate bent on being a spectator of his friends' achievements. "I had tied Mme. de Coigny's letters next my heart," he writes, "and ordered that my body should be thrown overboard dressed, as I was, in the case of my being killed."

The *Aigle* and the *Gloire* fought gallantly; they came to such close quarters with the foe that the

gunners hit at each other with their ramrods. Notwithstanding her greater strength the *Hector* got the worst of it; she was so much damaged that she would have been an easy prize, but at daybreak sails were seen in the offing, and M. de la Touche, for fear of a fatality, made all sail, abandoning the English ship to her fate.[1]

The officers and crew had shown great bravery. The army officers on board had had the honour of taking part in the fight, and inciting the sailors by their example and valour. Ségur relates a remarkable instance of cool wit. Some few days before, the Baron de Montesquieu, overhearing the Comte de Loménie discussing with M. de Ségur *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, by Duclos, had asked them what it was. For a joke they refused to satisfy his curiosity. In the thick of the fight and general confusion of the singing of bullets and roar of cannon, a chain shot splintered the bench on which Alexandre de Lameth, Loménie, Montesquieu, and Ségur had just been sitting. "There," said Loménie coolly to Montesquieu, "you wanted to know what *Liaisons dangereuses* might be: there is an example."

On September 11 they sighted land, and sailed into Delaware Bay. They captured an English corvette on her way out of the river, and sailed on, but with the greatest caution, for they had no pilot, and the estuary was dangerous from shifting sand-banks. At nightfall M. de la Touche cast anchor and

[1] The *Hector* foundered in a storm some days later, but part of the crew were saved.

sent a boat ashore to fetch a pilot. Unfortunately the wind rose, the water was rough, the boat was swamped, and the officer in command had to save himself by swimming. To crown this misfortune, at dawn they saw the English fleet making all sail in pursuit; there was no choice, they must escape; the anchor cables were cut and they made for the river. M. de la Touche, hoping for the best, took the middle channel; the English were close behind him, and having pilots could steer with certainty. At this juncture the officer who, the evening before, had swum on shore, brought off two pilots: they told M. de la Touche that he had taken the wrong channel and was lost beyond rescue. A council of war at once decided that the land officers must instantly land in the boats, carrying the despatches. There was not a minute to lose. Lauzun, still very weak, Viomenil, Laval, Bozon de Talleyrand, Broglie, Ségur and the rest were taken across the river and landed on the right bank. They left the ship on the 13th at six in the evening.

Their situation was not a pleasant one. Without luggage, servants or horses, having had no food for four and twenty hours, on an unknown shore, surrounded by dense forests and dangerous swamps, they knew not what to do nor which way to turn. After wandering for some time in the woods they came on a fence indicating a homestead, and found their way to the house of a Mr. Mandlaw, who told them that they were in a part of Maryland, and who gave them some food.

But to be out of danger was not everything; they must secure help for M. de la Touche and save the treasure he had on board. Everyone worked with a will; by three in the morning 1,800,000 francs had been carried on shore. Suddenly a hostile long-boat came in sight. M. de Vioménil, in great alarm, had the rest of the money thrown overboard. Next day, when the danger was past, the 1,200,000 francs were fished up again, with great difficulty, and at an enormous cost, carts, oxen and horses were procured, and the precious freight was transported to the little town of Dover, the nearest at hand.

It was high time. The *Gloire*, and the corvette she had taken, succeeded after many efforts in getting over the sand-bar that stopped the channel, and they reached Philadelphia without further difficulty. The *Aigle* was less happy. The frigate drew more water than the *Gloire;* she lay on the sand and heeled over so much that it was impossible to serve her guns. Seeing that she was lost beyond redemption, M. de la Touche cut down her masts, and after making a show of defence hauled down her flag. To crown his misfortunes, hardly had he surrendered to the English when he heard that the merchantman with his mistress on board, which he had been obliged to cut adrift, had been captured as it entered the bay.

Lauzun remained at Dover a few days to recruit his strength. Ill as he was, he introduced his companions, Broglie and the others, to the society of the place, and they were heartily welcomed. Broglie

did not know a word of English, but he substituted for words a most expressive pantomime ; he took tea with frenzy, "by which means," says he, "I had all the necessary elements of success." By the end of a few days he could tell a young lady that she was pretty and a man that he was sympathetic, and then he was on the high road to triumph.

Ségur also frequented the society of Dover, Maryland ; but other and more important objects absorbed his attention. He was much struck by all he saw. He "nowhere found," he says, "an extreme either of magnificence or misery." There was nowhere the contrast, to be seen in France, of "the luxury of the upper class and the rags of our swarming crowd of poor." The appearance of the people you saw about told you plainly that you were "in the land of reason, order and liberty." And in this way our young officers, astonished by so new a spectacle, became enthusiastic for the principles of equality and liberty, and learned to be, in years to come, the ardent partisans of these new ideas. They were struck by the hideous contrast between the splendour and squalor of their own country, and their generous souls rebelled at the thought of the horrible misery of so many of their fellow countrymen. This example had been needed to convince them of the cruel injustice of the state of society in which they had lived, giving everything to a few, and to the rest the right to die of hunger.

As soon as Lauzun was able, he set out for Philadelphia by easy stages. He there met M. de la

Luzerne, the French Minister, who welcomed him cordially and gave him the care required by his wretched state of health. He had a persistent fever and frequent fainting fits; he saw American and French physicians, and all these learned leeches agreed in pronouncing that he could not live through the autumn. As to joining Rochambeau's army, it was not to be thought of. Lauzun received this sentence of death with equanimity; his only regret in leaving the world was that he should not see Mme. de Coigny again.

But, being condemned, he might as well make the most of the short time left to him; in this conviction, and introduced by M. de la Luzerne, he went into society with his friends. The house they most frequented was that of Mrs. Morris, the wife of the Controller-General of the newly United States. "Her home is plain, but regular and well-kept," writes the Prince de Broglie; "the mistress of the house is tolerably good-looking and tolerably fair; everything pleased me greatly; I drank excellent tea, and should, I believe, be drinking it still if the Ambassador had not charitably warned me, at my twelfth cup, that I must lay my spoon across my cup when I wished that this ordeal by hot water should cease. 'For,' said he 'it is almost uncivil to refuse a cup of tea when it is offered you, but it would be indiscreet on the part of the master of the house to offer you more when the ceremony of the spoon has signified your wishes in the matter.'"

While Lauzun is trying to cheer his last days, let

us see what had become of M. de Rochambeau, from whom we parted nearly a year ago.

It will be remembered that he had sent Lauzun and some other officers to Versailles, not only to carry to the King news of his victory, but also to ask for reinforcements and a plan of campaign. In the month of January no one had come back; in the month of June, no one yet. The General was at his wits' end, all his letters and petitions invariably remained unanswered. In July he wrote lamentably to the Minister: "Here we are on the 1st of July without my having received any plan of campaign, or seen the return of one of the officers I sent to ask his Majesty's instructions after the taking of Yorktown."

The season was advancing, something must be done. On July 1, the troops moved out of Williamsburg; they reached Baltimore, and from thence the camp at Peek's Hill, where they joined the American army. Some days later M. de Rochambeau established his camp at Providence, a prosperous little commercial town of about 2000 inhabitants. The weather broke and the season was a very rough one; the troops, though in huts, suffered severely from almost constant rain and snow. At last M. de Rochambeau heard that Lauzun and his comrades had landed after many perils, and had brought the money he so sorely needed. He at once sent a courier to Lauzun, begging him to join him at once without losing a minute, as he had matters to communicate of the highest importance.

The Duc was enjoying a respite from his malady. A ship had just sailed for France, and he had been able to write to Mme. de Coigny. This epistolary effusion had brought about a happy reaction. On receiving Rochambeau's letter he did not hesitate a moment. He had a horse saddled and set out, with only one servant. "I might as well die on the road," says he, "as at Philadelphia." But the journey worked a happy change in his physical and moral condition; by the time he reached the camp he was a new man, or rather he was himself again, and ready to do whatever he was commanded.

Rochambeau informed him in confidence that he had received dispatches which put an end to his tribulations. He was recalled to France and was taking with him the greater part of his army. The troops remaining in America were to be under Lauzun's command.

On November 28, Rochambeau left Providence with his staff; on December 1, the troops that were leaving went to Boston, where they embarked on board the ships of M. de Vaudreuil's squadron.

CHAPTER XVIII.

1782—1783.

Lauzun in America—News from France—Death of M. de Voyer, and of Mme. Dillon—M. de Guéménée's insolvency—Lauzun returns to France—His Volunteers are disbanded—The Lauzun Hussars.

Thus Lauzun was left in America with his legion and the troops which M. de Rochambeau could not take with him. As soon as he was alone he re-crossed the river and took up winter quarters in Delaware county. His health was improving under the influence of rest; by degrees it was completely restored. But his life wore on, lonely and melancholy, and no events broke its monotony. He devoted himself exclusively to his military duties, and to maintaining the troops committed to his care in good health and spirits. He scarcely went into Philadelphia society, where he was very cordially received; he avoided rather than sought invitations. He lived solely in the hopes of letters from Mme. de Coigny; but day followed day, week followed week, and no vessel arrived from France.

At last the frigate *Danaë* brought in a heavy mail. Alas! it contained nothing of what Lauzun most

wished for—not a line from Mme. de Coigny. He received indeed much news from other friends, but all sad and heart-breaking.

M. de Voyer—his intimate friend since he was twenty, whose delicacy and generosity he had proved again and again—M. de. Voyer was dead in consequence of one of those catastrophes which are so common at courts.

One day at Marly, Louis XVI., with his usual blunt rudeness, had, in public, reproached him for his dissolute life; M. de Voyer, surprised by the lecture, could not on the spur of the moment make any reply. On returning home he went to M. de Maurepas to beg him to procure him some reparation. He could not have chosen a worse mediator, for all he got out of the Minister was this speech: "We shall never be able to teach the King manners." The word "manners" was, under the circumstances, an insult, and this, with the King's refusal to grant him the blue riband he had asked for, and his hard tone towards him, hurt M. de Voyer so deeply, in spite of the philosophy he professed, that he set out for his estate of Les Ormes, and would not be persuaded to quit it. From that time his health failed rapidly, and all who were about him were convinced that he died of chagrin.

Lauzun was greatly grieved by the death of this faithful old friend, the companion of his youth. But a far more distressing piece of news was to follow, and wound his most cherished memories. The charming Mme. Dillon, whom he had loved so well

and, for lack of anything warmer, with faithful and affectionate friendship, was also dead. Her health had for a long time been extremely delicate. In 1781 she had spit blood, but she seemed to have recovered, and it had been thought that the attack was only temporary. M. de Guéménée, at first extremely anxious, had, like every one else, hoped she was cured. But in the course of 1782 the mischief had developed, and soon no illusion was possible as to the fatal issue not long distant.

A journey to Naples was planned; M. de Guéménée would escort her thither in the hope that the milder climate of Italy would restore her to health. But in a few days the invalid's weakness and wasting made such rapid strides that the journey was out of the question. All Mme. Dillon's friends were in the greatest anxiety; M. de Guéménée was in despair. She herself alone did not understand how ill she was, and thought of preparations for the journey, sometimes inquiring as to the springs of her carriage, sometimes as to the arrangement of her trunks, sometimes what dress she could wear that would be most convenient. Then she made plans for her return: she would spend the summer at her dear Hautefontaine, which was full of all the happiest associations of her life, with her uncle, the kind archbishop, among faithful friends with her beloved prince.

The Queen, who had always been tenderly attached to her, wished to see her again, and she came to spend a day with her. Mme. Dillon, happily

ignorant of her approaching end, asked leave of absence of Her Majesty for a journey to Naples. Marie Antoinette granted the request with a mute sign of acquiescence, but her eyes were full of tears, and sobs choked her voice; she had only just time to pull her hat over her face that the invalid might not see her agitation and grief.

Everybody was sincerely sorry for M. de Guéménée; his despair was so deep and so genuine that even those who were not his friends could not help being touched by it. For twelve years he had loved Mme. Dillon and lived for her alone with faithful devotion. Mme. Dillon died; and it was a happy thing for her, for death spared her the bitter grief she would have felt at seeing the dire catastrophe that before long overwhelmed her friend.

M. de Guéménée, after the loss that grieved him so greatly, retired to one of his estates in Touraine, to mourn in silence and out of the world. But he was too great a favourite to be left alone with his sorrow. He was accompanied by the Chevalier de l'Isle; Mme. de Montbazon and Mme. de Coigny ere long followed him, and their kindness and charm and sympathy brought some balm to the unhappy man's inconsolable grief.

It was during this visit to the country, in September 1782, when M. de Guéménée seemed least to expect it, that the celebrated crash of insolvency came, which was a fatal blow to the great and illustrious house of Rohan.

"M. and Mme. de Guéménée have lost everything,"

wrote the Chevalier de l'Isle, "fortune, living, position, and a home ; in short everything, without even saving what our Francis I. boasted that he had saved. This bankruptcy is enormous ; it would be crushing to the richest and greatest potentate in Europe ; the number of persons ruined by it is immense, and the author of so much calamity is not yet seven and thirty ! " The Prince had failed for more than thirty million francs (1,200,000*l.*). The scandal was the greater for being incredible. A Rohan insolvent !

Consternation prevailed both in Paris and at Versailles. Every rank of society was affected by it. The Duc de Coislin, Thomas, l'Abbé Delille, servants, small traders, porters, Breton sailors, a swarm of humble persons who had been blinded by the Prince's position and name, lost everything they had possessed. Mlle. Arnould lost thirty thousand francs. "Alas ! " said she cheerfully, "what came from the flute is gone back to the drum."

The Rohan family were willing to make the very greatest sacrifices to secure to the Prince and his wife the highest offices of the kingdom, but they had roused too many jealousies ; their fall was seen with joy. The King, in the first impulse of indignation, insisted on the Prince's resigning all his appointments, and forbade his appearing again in his presence till his debts should be paid. Mme. de Guéménée met with no greater indulgence. Louis XVI. wished to leave her in her office out of regard to Mme. de Marsan, but the Queen was opposed to it ; indeed, she was pitilessly hard on

her old friend. "The future King of France," said she, "cannot be brought up by a bankrupt's wife." It is difficult to understand how the Queen, who had for so many years honoured Mme. de Guéménée with her greatest intimacy, could so readily and so suddenly withdraw her confidence from her.[1]

On hearing this disastrous news Mme. de Marsan flew to see the King; she was accustomed to carry things with a high hand, and she imperiously demanded for herself her niece's appointment, asserting that though she had ceded it to her, she had reserved the reversion. But Louis XVI., prompted by the Queen, absolutely refused to grant this. Mme. de Marsan then desired to see the Queen, who would not even receive her. The Prince de Soubise was equally out of favour; the reign of the Rohans was at an end.

When his bankruptcy was declared the Prince de Guéménée returned from Touraine with the Chevalier de l'Isle, but the prefect of police assured him he would be insulted in the streets, and advised him to leave Paris; on the following day he ordered him to go to Navarre, to his uncle's, the Duc de Bouillon. The Princesse was banished to Vigny, an estate near Pontoise, belonging to M. de Soubise. This was the dullest and most inconvenient residence possible. The château had not been inhabited for a century; a few old tapestry hangings with ugly figures, formed

[1] The Princesse, on her part, owed enormous sums; 60,000 francs to her shoemaker, 16,000 to her paperhanger, and others in the same proportion.

its only decoration. "And there, perhaps, the poor Princesse, obliged to think of every louis, will have to spend the rest of her life with two or three footmen," wrote M. de l'Isle to the Prince de Ligne. "Remember, mon prince, the splendour in which we saw her on December 22 last year, at two in the afternoon, carrying in her arms M. le Dauphin, cheered by the people, and her train borne by Mme. Adelaide; just think that on such a day, and at the same hour, she quitted Versailles humiliated and abased, and then see if you think that any great value is to be attached to the honours of this world. Not that I would wish to persuade you to care only for those of the other world; I care no more for these than for those; but I believe neither to be worth tormenting ourselves for them." By a curious irony of fate it was to the Château of Vigny that Mme. de Ventadoux had come—she likewise of the house of Rohan—when she was appointed Governess to the Royal children; "and it was there that Mme. de Guéménée went to be the Governess no more. And so the wheel goes round."

The Princesse bore this reverse of fortune with admirable courage. She lived at Vigny in a style of simplicity bordering on penury; but all who went to see her there found an even greater lady than she had been amid the pomp of Versailles. A rumour was promulgated that she would sell her diamonds to pay her husband's debts; but she did nothing of the kind, and it was remembered against her that she had once pledged them to rescue Lauzun under similar circumstances.

The whole of the Rohan family tried to help the Guéménées. Mme. de Marsan behaved with great dignity. She sold her horses; she paid out of her own fortune all she could of her nephew's debts, and particularly the small interests. The young Duchesse de Montbazon, the Prince's daughter-in-law, hearing that the diamonds and jewels given her at her marriage were not paid for, at once returned them to the jeweller.

But the Rohans made the most blundering speeches. The High Almoner seemed to glory in the bankruptcy. "Only a King or a Rohan could be insolvent for such a sum!" he exclaimed. So the Marquis de Villette spoke of the catastrophe as the "Most Serene bankruptcy."[1]

The behaviour of the King and Queen roused the deepest animosity of the Rohan family. Mme. de Coigny took her friends' part with excessive violence; from that day dated her real hatred of the Queen, whom she considered responsible for the King's severity. By refusing to uphold the dignity of the High Chamberlain, and of his wife as Governess to the Royal Children, by allowing their name to sink in the mire of an ignominious failure, Louis XVI. committed an imprudence for which there are no words, and himself struck the first blow at the *noblesse*, as yet untouched; the second was to follow ere long, but then royalty itself received the blow full in the face.

[1] Young Vestris, son of the famous dancer, having run heavily into debt, his father exclaimed in a rage, "I will have you to know, sir, that I will have no Guéménées in my family!"

The tendency of ideas, the American war, events in their course, the aberration and blindness of the governing classes, all combined to undermine the respect which the populace owed to its rulers, and the reverence they had paid them for centuries.

As soon as Mme. de Guéménée's dismissal became known, several ladies, as may be supposed, put themselves forward as claimants for her office; but the Queen's choice was made. It was to her bosom friend, Mme. de Polignac, that she purposed giving these high functions. Mme. de Polignac, calm, indolent, and used to a peaceful life of independence among her friends and family, was already often weary and annoyed by the demands of her position as favourite. She looked forward only with dread to a dignity encumbered with so heavy a chain, of which nothing could ever relieve her. At first she refused; great persuasion was needed to overcome her resistance. And then, even before undertaking her duties, she tried to evade the most fatiguing part of them. The Chevalier de l'Isle wrote, "Is Mme. de Polignac to sleep in the Dauphin's room? No. . . . this is expressly stipulated." But a glass door between her room and his allowed of her seeing all that went on in the royal nursery. This, however, was no novelty; it was the ingenious invention of Mme. de Guéménée, who thus reconciled her duties with her own rest.

The deep grief all this news brought to Lauzun may be imagined. "My unhappy friend had nothing left in the world," he writes. "His mistress, his

honour, his fortune, that of his children and that of many others—all was lost at once." Lauzun would fain have embarked forthwith to go to his unfortunate friend, and offer him such comfort as his generous heart prompted; but how could he abandon the army just left in his charge?

It will be remembered that at the time when his own affairs had been settled, Lauzun had handed over his whole possessions to M. de Guéménée in consideration of an annual revenue of eighty thousand francs. This was all that had been left to him; and now these eighty thousand francs had sunk in the general crash of the Guéménée insolvency. Lauzun, with touching generosity and a rare loftiness of spirit, writes not a word of blame, not a word of complaint of the man who had ruined him. He thinks only of his friend's misfortune, of his poverty, and of the means of succouring him.

But what troubled Lauzun far more than his own ruin was the want of letters from Mme. de Coigny. To be so far from her, alone, isolated, lost in a foreign land, and to have no word from her was really torture. He did not indeed accuse so sweet a woman of forgetfulness or negligence, but he thought she must be ill, and his heart was in anguish. Besides, all the sad news he had received had cast a gloom over him. He dreaded unknown misfortunes, and sometimes the thought crossed his mind that the Marquise might be dead.

A ship was sailing for France; he took the opportunity of writing to all those he loved. To Mme. de

Coigny he poured out all his love, all the tenderness he felt for her, all the feelings with which his heart was overflowing. He begged her to take a solicitous interest in M. de Guéménée, and not to abandon his friend in his misfortunes. He also wrote a long letter to the Prince, doing his utmost to console him, and assuring him that he was at all times and under all circumstances a friend whom he might entirely command.

The life of Philadelphia had become intolerable to Lauzun ; there was too much society ; he longed for peace and rest. He decided on a journey to Rhode Island, to see the Hunter family, by whom, two years before, he had been so kindly received, and who had remained his very faithful friends. They were glad to welcome him to Newport, and he spent a quiet time there, which did him great good both physically and morally.

Towards the middle of February, 1783, the *Washington* arrived from France. Lauzun had the happiness of receiving two letters from Mme. de Coigny, one dated from Spa, July 26, 1782, and the other October 18 of the same year. So the dear creature was alive, and not ill. She had spent part of the month of July at Spa with her daughter Fanny and her friend the Comtesse Diane de Polignac. In October she was at Fontainebleau at the same time as the Court. But Mme. de Coigny did not write a mere report of the events of her life ; the sentimental side was not forgotten, and it inspired Lauzun with these reflections : "What letters ! With what touching simplicity did they depict her soul !

She had never loved M. de Chabot, she pitied me for having believed it. And she offered me, with such grace, every explanation that could restore my peace of mind!"

The war meanwhile had been disastrous for the belligerent powers; the English, after many successes in 1781, had met with serious checks in 1782. The French and Spanish had not been much more fortunate; they had, among other things, besieged Gibraltar, without succeeding in taking it. The Comte d'Artois had gone thither with twenty thousand men and forty ships. Two hundred field guns on the land side, and ten floating batteries, had opened fire on the citadel, on September 13; but it was admirably defended by its strong position, and by the bravery of its Governor, General Elliot. The place might have been forced to surrender, when some red-hot shot exploded one of the floating batteries. The fire spread through the fleet, and the Spaniards destroyed some ships, not to leave them in the enemy's hands.

The Comte d'Artois, who was giving a foretaste of his conduct at Quiberon, had taken up a deplorable attitude all through the siege; to such a point that M. de Maillebois, who was in command, went so far as to give notice to the English batteries that there would be no fighting when the Prince was making an inspection. M. de Maillebois was blamed for this, and he replied: "At any rate that was better than the wry faces he made the first day."

Everybody was tired of the contest and ready to

make peace. The English Ministry retired before the Opposition. Lord North ceased to be Prime Minister, and his place was filled by a Whig Minister, who made proposals to the Cabinet of Versailles for the cessation of hostilities. They were agreed to, and peace was signed at Versailles January 20, 1783. The Americans were not mentioned in the articles, but a secret provision secured their independence.

Lauzun was still at Newport when he heard that the war was at an end. It was not without regret that he parted from the friends who for three years had shown him so much cordiality and affection, helping him to endure his long exile. His adieu to Mrs. Hunter and her daughters was quite pathetic.

The Duc subsequently visited General Washington to take leave of him, and spent some days with him. He then went to Philadelphia. The frigate *Active* soon brought orders for the return to France of the remainder of the French army; by the same mail he had a letter from Mme. de Coigny of September 22, 1782.

He embarked his troops, and on May 11, 1783, he set sail from Wilmington for France. On June 11 the three frigates, the *Astrée*, the *Gloire*, and the *Danaë*, cast anchor in Brest harbour; they brought the Duc de Lauzun and part of his legion. The *Active* followed two days later, and later still came the *Romulus*, the *Guadeloupe*, and the *Lauzun*, vessels freighted for transports by Congress. As a delicate attention in honour of his brilliant conduct Congress had named one of the ships after our hero.

The officers who had taken part in the American war were received with great demonstrations of joy. Not only did M. de La Fayette not sink under the nickname of *Gilles le Grand*, bestowed on him by M. de Choiseul, but he inspired, on the contrary, the greatest enthusiasm.

Fersen was made Colonel of the Royal Swedish regiment, which formed part of the French army, and he remained at Versailles till 1788.

The poor gentleman came home looking ten years older; anxiety, disappointment, and privations had almost ruined his handsome face. The Queen, on seeing him again, was deeply touched at seeing the wreck caused by an unhappy passion.

Of the officers who had taken part in the American war not one was forgotten; some got governorships, others the Royal Orders, some promotion and some pensions. Lauzun alone had nothing.[1] He, who more than any one else had sacrificed himself personally, and done eminent service to the army, as was universally acknowledged, was persistently set aside. He made no complaint, but the bitterness he felt at

[1] His corps of foreign volunteers was disbanded by an order of September 14, 1785, and its place filled by a regiment of hussars for home service, called Lauzun's Hussars. It was numbered as the 6th. It was made the 5th in 1792, after the departure of the Saxony regiment. The Lauzun Hussars went from Hennebon to Lauterbourg in December 1783, and the regiment was there first regularly organized. At the second restoration it was disbanded, and the remains amalgamated with the present 6th Hussars, constituted in 1816 under the name of Upper Rhine Hussars (Hussars du Haut Rhin). The infantry of Lauzun's legion was incorporated with the marines, and was especially designated for service in Senegal.

such unmerited injustice may be readily imagined. Nor was this all; the hatred felt for him was visited on those who had served under him. His legion was not better treated than himself, and he felt the deepest indignation; which was shared, indeed, by the whole of the army.

CHAPTER XIX.

1783—1784.

Mme. de Coigny's pleasure at seeing Lauzun—A journey to England—Flattering reception by the Prince of Wales—Return to France—The Palais Royal circle—The Duc de Chartres in opposition—State of Society in 1783—The financial situation—The general mania for the supernatural—Cagliostro—Lauzun interviews the devil—M. de Caylus and his tragic end.

On returning to France with the little army entrusted to his charge, Lauzun had two great joys in prospect: to see Mme. de Coigny, the mistress he so tenderly and platonically loved; and to console his friend Guéménée, who had been so cruelly stricken in his fondest affections and by his loss of fortune. A few years ago our hero would have thought only of the Court and the successes he might easily win there; but experience had subdued him; he knew now the value of those ephemeral conquests and royal caprices which could raise him one day to the steps of the throne, and cast him down to nothingness the next. He would henceforth bow to no gods but friendship and true love.

No sooner had he landed at Brest than he flew to see the Marquise. He had the happiness of finding

her just what he had left her, and they had soon re-established the terms of intimacy which had formerly given them so many delightful hours together. But absence, fame, and laurels did not avail to break down the lady's virtuous resolution. She nevertheless took the greatest pleasure in her friend's society, and sought every opportunity of seeing him.

Not long after Lauzun's return to France, she had occasion to visit England with her father, the Marquis de Conflans. She proposed to Lauzun to escort them, and, as may be imagined, he accepted with joy. Mme. de Chalons, Mme. d'Andlau, and the Duc de Polignac were of the party, and they set out to spend a week in London.

The English aristocracy welcomed these amiable travellers most cordially, and it could scarcely be otherwise. Lauzun knew English society well, and was appreciated at his true worth. He had been a constant visitor for fifteen years and always gladly received. The Marquis de Conflans was not less well known nor less liked; he lived almost as much in London as in Paris, and, notwithstanding a great difference in their ages, he was one of the Prince of Wales' most genial companions; he was indeed regarded as the keeper of his conscience in matters of profligacy, and was blamed, not without reason, for inculcating in his pupil the very worst morality.[1]

Mme. de Coigny was introduced by her father to

[1] George, Prince of Wales, was at this time about two and twenty, having been born in 1762. He was made Regent in 1811, and came to the throne at his father's death in 1820.

the Prince, who seemed greatly struck by her charm and wit. He was a judge of such matters; he was considered the cleverest prince in Europe, and the most accomplished courtier. Handsome, smart and gallant, he was the idol of women. He thought Mme. de Coigny and all her friends delightful; he gave entertainments in their honour, and all the aristocracy laid themselves out to make London as agreeable to them as possible. After a week of amusement and enjoyment the party returned to Paris.

During Lauzun's absence in America many changes had taken place in society, in its manners and ideas. We will see how his friends lived—those friends with whom he spent all his time, and who led him ultimately into the political course he has been so often blamed for following.

Mme. de Coigny, as we know, had reigned unrivalled in the Guéménées' circle; but since the Prince's disastrous bankruptcy, which had for the time dispersed all the members of that family, she had become intimate at the Palais Royal. She was welcome there because her father was a great ally of the Duc de Chartres; he had been the companion of his pleasures during their wild and profligate youth, and they had remained on cordial terms ever since. The introduction of Mme. de Coigny as a member of the Palais Royal coterie was co-incident with the Duc de Chartres' growing hostility to the Court. The Marquise, who on her part had, for some years, gradually been abandoning her ground at Versailles, found here a society that attracted her, where she

could speak her mind, and where she, ere long, filled an important position. She then opened an eager campaign against the Queen's influence.

We have seen in a former chapter, that motives of fidelity and friendship had prompted the Marquise to positive hostility against Marie Antoinette. The Court indeed had not been kind to her; her nature was not one to accommodate itself to its tone; she was the object of some jealousy, and abuse of her was supposed to be acceptable to the Queen. Besides, she was feared for her arrogance and her biting and lacerating tongue; in short she was hated. She herself was not at her ease at Court; she felt herself in an atmosphere of threatening aversion; she returned blow for blow, no doubt, and with interest, but still she detested this society of courtiers who thought so ill of her. After M. de Guéménée's insolvency and the pitiless severity of the sovereign pair, Mme. de Coigny was completely soured, and was never to be seen at Versailles but on exceptional occasions of paramount obligation.

This was not the end. Her superior and perspicuous mind soon discerned the hopeless weakness of the King's party. On all sides there was a spirit of revolt against the vices and abuses of the old order of things; Mme. de Coigny, with the double motive of her good sense and of her vindictiveness, became an ardent advocate of the new ideas; she dreamed of reforms, of social changes, and the rest.

From this moment she broke completely with the aristocracy and the Court nobility; she affected the

utmost contempt for the Versailles circle, and neglected no chance of defying them. On the other hand she kept all her affections for the middle class and the people. It was not alone at the Palais Royal that she reigned supreme ; in every political, literary and philosophical *salon* her success was amazing. With wit, beauty and grace, she had every charm that could fascinate and enthral those who came within her reach. "I am Queen at Versailles," said Marie Antoinette, "but Mme. de Coigny is Queen in Paris."

She was not only possessed by the demon of politics ; she also had a mania for proselytizing. She carried away all admirers, and Lauzun, of course, at their head. He, too, had ample reasons for turning his back on an ungrateful Court. After being the favourite of a day he had drunk deep of disappointment, and had been treated with flagrant injustice. A very human instinct threw him back on his nearest friends, Mme. de Coigny and the Duc de Chartres, and he had sought in their society some comfort in his mortification. Then the way in which M. and Mme. de Guéménée were treated, his friends of twenty years' standing, filled him with indignation. His devotion to Mme. de Coigny did the rest. How, in the position thus made for him, could he do otherwise than share his adored lady's rancour, and follow her even in her errors when his own spirit was so full of grievances? He at once threw himself into the Palais Royal faction, without for an instant foreseeing the consequences that were to ensue.

"A concurrence of inevitable circumstances

dragged M. de Lauzun into the abyss," writes the Duc de Lévis ; " but the first cause of his misfortunes was not, as might be supposed, an ardent love of liberty and heady ideas of republicanism. Though wrong-headed he had a sound judgment ; they are not incompatible. He knew men well, and he also knew that a democratic government is unsuited to a great nation, more so to the French than to any other people. I have heard him say this many times, and his principles never changed. But by taking part against the Court he fancied he could be revenged for a personal grievance, without compromising his own safety or that of the State. Finally, he was too ready to think that the days of the Ligue and of the Fronde could return, when the great nobles could air their discontent with impunity. This was his destruction."

The Duc de Lauzun was not the only man to blind himself as to the possible issues of this campaign against Royal authority. Almost all the members of that circle were equally shortsighted. His intimate friend, the Duc de Chartres, shared his illusions, and helped to involve him in the career which was so fatal to them both.

How was it that the Prince, who by birth and position should have been the most faithful pillar of the throne, had become its most inveterate enemy ? A little knowledge of the human heart is enough to explain it. The chief feature of his character was its utter weakness, and in this weakness we may find the reason for his conduct. It was quite against his will

that he meddled with politics at all; but he was surrounded by ambitious men who spurred him on. The Duc de Chartres was a mere man of pleasure, and thought of nothing but pleasure. He went up in balloons, he dabbled in magic with Cagliostro, Lauzun, and the Chevalier de Luxembourg, he kept race-horses, and gave dinners constantly at his Chateau de Mousseaux to his friends and the prettiest disreputables of Paris; it was there that orgies were held which became notorious. But the Prince was kind, good-natured to all about him, and he had the gift of inspiring strong attachments, which is not that of a vulgar soul. Lauzun was unshaken in his devotion to the end.

In 1777, as has been said, the Queen, on trivial grounds, had become very cool to the Duc d'Orléans. From that moment he had been spared no humiliation; the Queen systematically excluded him from her intimate circle, and showed him marked antipathy on all occasions. He was not invited to several of the great fêtes at Trianon. He was to be seen mingling with the crowd, in the company of certain ladies who were also out of favour with the Queen, looking on at the illuminations and revenging himself by sallies of bitter satire. More serious incidents had added to his dissatisfaction. After the fight off Ushant, the Court promulgated accusations against his courage which, though utterly false, nettled him excessively. Then, when he asked to be appointed High Admiral, he was refused, and he never forgave the King.

This series of annoyances led to an intensely hostile

feeling between the Duc de Chartres and the Court. The Prince led away a strong following of friends—everyone who had any complaint against the King. There were Lauzun, the Duc d'Aiguillon, Mathieu de Montmorency, Sillery, Mirabeau, Talleyrand, the Vicomte de Noailles, the Comte de la Marck, Laclos, Merlin de Douai, and others.

It was all the easier to prompt the Duc de Chartres to active opposition, because he had only to follow the general current of ideas. Nothing was more fashionable than rebellion, and attacks on the Government were rife, even among Courtiers. It was now in good taste to mock at the solemn etiquette of former days, and the old monarchical institutions. The liberty of the new modes of life was highly praised; everyone was wild for new ideas, for philosophy, democracy and equality; still it was but an affectation, a game; they were all firmly convinced that no change could be made in a state of things which had lasted for centuries, and which everyone found extremely comfortable. Superior birth would continue to secure favours and every kind of pleasure, as it had hitherto done; and what amply proves that the aristocracy did not propose to forego its privileges, is the fact that the Maréchal de Ségur chose this critical moment to enact that the posts of officers in the army should henceforth be given only to men of noble birth.[1]

[1] M. de Ségur, by thus requiring certificates of nobility, reduced thousands of rich men to despair by excluding them from officers' rank.

The heads of the old families thought themselves as secure as the monarchy, and unhesitatingly supported an opposition of which they did not foresee the danger. To these young aristocrats, who were constantly going to England, and who there saw the action of the parliamentary system, it seemed quite a simple matter to form an opposition party. It is too often forgotten that it was in fact the French nobility that first thrust the people over the precipice where it was afterwards impossible to stop them. "It ought not to be said," writes the Prince de Ligne, "that philosophy caused the Revolution. I saw no philosophers in the case, only gentlemen who had derogated, and common people who had made themselves fine gentlemen."

No one had an idea where they were going. Excepting only in a few clear-sighted spirits, reckless confidence everywhere prevailed. Mme. de Genlis relates that when the first meeting of the Notables took place, the Duc de Chartres and Lauzun were discussing events at her house one evening. Lauzun remarked that the Assembly would probably reform many abuses, and Mme. de Genlis was of his opinion. The Duc de Chartres, on the contrary, maintained that they would reform no abuses, not even that of *lettres de cachet*, and he was so convinced of it that he bet Lauzun fifty louis on it. The Prince's views were those of society in general. A revolution was considered impossible, and it was an amusement to play with fire.

Thus everybody became a Freemason. The

Candeur Lodge included the most distinguished names at the Court—the Duc and Duchesse de Chartres, the Comte and Comtesse de Polignac, the Princesse de Lamballe, the Duchesse de Bourbon. On February 20, 1781, the Head Scottish Lodge of Adoption elected Mme. de Lamballe to be Grand Mistress, and all the Princess's little Court must at once play at masonic ceremonies.[1]

Marie Christine tried to frighten her sister about these secret societies. "Everyone belongs to them," said the Queen; "consequently, whatever goes on becomes known; where, then, is the danger?"

Infatuation and blindness had reached such a pitch even in the highest circles, that, in the King's private theatre at Versailles, the whole Court applauded with enthusiasm the tragedy of Brutus, especially these two lines:—

> "I am the son of Brutus; on my heart
> Is graven Liberty, and scorn of Kings."

The French, who had come back from America imbued with the doctrines of equality, contributed greatly to the diffusion of these ideas; those dashing officers who had, as Chateaubriand said, daubed their orders with republican colours, wanted to see

[1] A Lodge of Adoption was one to which women were admitted. At the ceremony of installation Mme. de Soyecourt represented her most Serene Highness the Grand Mistress; Mme. de Tolozan was the inspectress; Mme. de Bouillé the speaker; Mme. de Montalembert the secretary; Mme. d'Hinnisdal the chancelloress; Mmes. de Lostanges and de Boynes were almoners; Mme. de Berc was chief mistress of the ceremonies; and Mme. de Las Cases played the part of the Terrible Sister.

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the ideas they had brought with them put into practice.

There was one matter, which had hitherto always passed unconsidered, which no one had thought twice about: the money question. Money had never been lacking, or, if the coffers of the Treasury were empty, they had been refilled by a little squeezing of the tax-paying classes. But now this was changed; the ugly word "deficit" had been introduced; there was no money, and no one knew how to procure any. Thus the financial question had come to the front, and those who were, or who believed themselves, experts in finance enjoyed the greatest popularity. Of these Necker was the most famous. When the Treasury was found to be empty the Swiss banker came forward as a preserver; but he only raised loans instead of levying taxes. He believed himself called to play a great part; he gathered about him philosophers, men of letters, moneyed men and capitalists; in their wake came ambitious and intriguing adventurers. But Necker was nothing more than a banker-*philosophe*, by no means equal to his situation, nor, above all, to the opinion he had of himself. He contributed largely to the success of the Revolution. When he was obliged to retire, in May, 1781, the crash of his downfall was tremendous. A vast crowd rushed from all parts of the Kingdom and voted addresses to him. Everywhere, in all public places, cafés, and fashionable resorts, nothing was to be heard but his name. One day, in some public resort, the Duchesse de Lauzun addressed a

perfect stranger in vehement reproof because he was speaking ill of the fallen Minister.

Necker was not the only man who enjoyed a great reputation at Paris in financial matters; there was another Swiss who upheld a rival school: this was Panchaud. He had lived for a long time in England; then he had come to Paris, where he had founded a banking house. He spoke with ease, and his arguments were clear; he had soon achieved a great reputation, and everyone ran after him to learn the science of finance. It was really very amusing to see this whole generation, who had flung money away by handfuls, suddenly possessed by the desire of learning the art of filling the public treasury, and administering the public moneys. Courtiers, abbés, magistrates, all wanted to become great financiers. Panchaud had a seductive fluency which carried away his hearers. He soon had numbers of pupils, and the most illustrious personages were to be found at his house every evening; Lauzun, Mirabeau, and Talleyrand zealously attended the learned banker's lectures, and strove to acquire, for the benefit of others, the difficult science which they so greatly needed for their own.

It was not the public treasury alone that had run dry; private fortunes were seriously impaired. The Prince de Guéménée's fate threatened many noble names; even Mlle. Bertin, the famous modiste, failed for two million francs. The reason was, that while incomes had shrunk and money become scarce, luxury had not been reduced, and the

expenses of persons of fashion were still enormously great. The maintenance of the table especially led to excessive outlay. Grand suppers were no longer given, but many, like the Duc de Choiseul, kept open house for fifty or sixty persons. This form of extravagance was contagious; at first it was confined to those who held appointments at Court, and then, by degrees, it became general. "Will Mme. de Polignac entertain all France?" wrote the Prince de Ligne to the Chevalier de l'Isle, when the Duchesse was made governess to the Royal children. "Yes," replied the Chevalier, "three times a week—Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, from morning till night. During these seventy-two hours it is a general scamper, any one may come in, and dine and sup. The way in which the rabble of the Court swarm there is a thing to see. During these three days not only the drawing-room is crowded—it always is—but the conservatory, which is used as a corridor with a billiard-room at the end. On the four days of the week not hereinbefore mentioned, the door is opened only to us, the favoured few."

This frenzied love of luxury had not, as may be supposed, added to the genial pleasures of intimacy. The mania for politics had invaded every grade of society; ministries were formed and overthrown in every Paris drawing-room. At Mme. de Montesson's, Mme. Necker's, Mme. de Beauvau's, Mme. de Polignac's, Mme. de Brionne's, etc., nothing was talked of but the merits and shortcomings of

M. Necker, M. de Calonne, and the rest. All the *salons*, where formerly everyone talked so well, and where love-making was the chief business of the hour, had vanished from the scene and found no successors. A drawing-room was now a hot-bed of political and financial discussion.

The Prince de Ligne, a looker-on at this alteration in the manners and tone of the best society, deplored it deeply, and vented his laments wittily enough: "Never was Court society—men and women alike—less attractive, or less polite, than in 1786. Society was worn out; people met too often, and too early in the day. The two sexes were not seen at their best; the women were not yet in full dress; the men all muddy, stepping out of their cabriolets with the dull look produced by the damp Paris atmosphere. There was no more gallantry, no wish to please, few means of pleasing; grace a thing of the past, no distinguished looks, no elegant figures. Elegance consisted in having none. Dinners for men alone; self-styled wits, or military men who knew nothing of military matters, had spoiled society. Commonplace remarks on liberty and abuses made them fancy themselves English; how many times have I said in the drawing-room of the Italian Theatre: "Put down those huge newspapers which you cannot read; what to you are Pitt and Fox, who are always making fun of Anglomaniacs? You do not know even the name of the Governor of your own province! For lack of accomplishments these young men, anxious to be profound, have

taken to writing, and are as much bored as bores. This was not characteristic of the young men of fifty, forty, thirty, twenty years ago. Beyond 'I love you madly, I shall be at your feet between eleven and midnight,'—the substance of a dozen circular epistles such as I have seen written for distribution by Letorière—they would never have found time to write more. Locks *à l'oiseau royal*, or a hundred curls, or *ailes de pigeon;* the choice between powder *à l'orange* and pomatum *au jasmin*, deliberations between sweet water and honey-water, filled up the rest of the morning with the coxcombs of my day; and coxcombs do not make revolutions."

The new generation was not merely in love with liberty, independence, politics, finance; it threw itself passionately into everything that was connected with the supernatural. Philosophical scepticism had killed the little religion that was left, but these sceptics, as they thought themselves, were infected with the blindest credulity concerning everything in the way of evocations, apparitions, divinations and the rest.

A contemptible empiric, a self-styled prophet, come no one knew from whence, threw society into a commotion, and played indirectly a considerable part as a determining cause of the Revolution. Cagliostro, after travelling through all the countries of Europe, suddenly made his appearance at Strasbourg. He called himself an Egyptian initiated into the secrets of nature, knowing various simples to

cure diseases and prolong human life. By feeling the patient's pulse he could divine all the maladies that affected him, all he had, and all he ever would have. Various cures, effected almost suddenly, of sufferers who had been given up, secured him an incredible reputation. Cagliostro was of middle height, his complexion was olive, his neck short, his nose turned up, his round face was lighted up by large prominent eyes extraordinarily brilliant and keen. His hair was dressed in a fashion new to the French; it was divided into several little queues brought together at the back of the head, and tied up in what was then called a club. He generally wore an iron-grey coat of French cut braided with gold, a scarlet waistcoat with a broad bordering of Spanish lace, scarlet breeches, and a sword passed through the skirt of his coat. He had diamonds on his fingers, in his lace frill, on his watch chains, and a hat with white feather edging. For ten months in the year he wore a large blue-fox fur pelisse with a hood.

Cardinal de Rohan was just then at his fine palace at Saverne. He asked to see the famous doctor. "If Mgr. the Cardinal is ill," said Cagliostro, "let him come to me and I will cure him; if he is well he does not need me, nor I him." This insolent reply delighted the Cardinal; he soon was the quack's great friend, and Cagliostro knew how to win his entire confidence and acquire complete ascendency over him.

This is a detail which exactly characterizes the period. This Cardinal of the Roman Church, High

Almoner to the King, was the intimate friend of a charlatan who pretended to hold discourse with the angel of light and the demon of darkness.

Such a jewel of a man could not be allowed to remain in the provinces. The Cardinal was bent on introducing him to Paris: he took him there, and gave him a fine apartment in the palace of the Rohans. Cagliostro at once drove Paris crazy, and soon had numbers of proselytes. He talked with an inspired air of the heavens, the stars, the great *arcanum*, of Memphis and the hierophant, of transcendental chemistry ; he announced what was taking place at the same moment at Vienna, London and Pekin ; he foretold futurity.

For all his elucubrations he wanted nothing but a glass globe filled with distilled water. A *Dove*—that is to say a girl in a state of innocence, as pure as the angels and born under a certain constellation—knelt in front of it ; then, under the imposition of the Grand Copt's hands, she was inspired with the faculty of communicating with the spirits of the intermediary sphere, and saw in the water all that might interest the person for whose benefit the revelation was encouraged. Cagliostro called the spirits, the water grew turbid, the seer was convulsed, and read the future in the water.

This fired the capital with enthusiasm. Nobody believed in God, but they believed in Cagliostro. Nor was it the populace only whose heads were turned, but educated persons, learned men, academicians, and ministers. The most important men displayed an enthusiasm and a confidence that are quite incom-

prehensible. Lauzun, the Duc de Chartres, the Chevalier de Luxembourg, and hundreds more, became impassioned adepts of the new sect, and rushed into all the follies of the *illuminati*. The Chevalier de Luxembourg even accepted the title of Grand Master of the Lodge of Egyptian Freemasonry, founded by the charlatan, and the greatest names of France were enrolled among its members.

M. de Caylus was one of Cagliostro's most fervent disciples. He had even the satisfaction of holding direct communication once with Beelzebub. Being anxious that his friends should share in this good fortune, he carried off with him to the quarries of Montmartre, Lauzun, the Duc de Chartres, M. de Créquy, and M. de Fronsac; he solemnly promised that they should see the devil. As soon as they got into the quarry the neophytes discerned in the distance a faintly glimmering lamp, hanging, it would seem, from the vault of the cave; but in order to reach it they had to go through a narrow and very dark passage; hardly had they entered it when they were pelted with blows from cudgels—it was as though they were being thrashed with flails. That was all they saw that day; they were not otherwise ill-used, and they were not robbed. But they went home desperately bruised, and were covered with scars and plaisters for more than a month.

The *Gazette de France* published the news that the Duc de Chartres had fallen from his horse and had hurt his head against a rail in the riding house.

The Duc de Fronsac only kept to his bed with his

shutters and curtains closed, but was otherwise none the worse. The Duc de Lauzun went about as usual, but carried his arm in a sling ; his face was black and blue, and anyone who questioned him got a rough answer. Still, this unpleasant adventure did not discourage him, and he and his friends continued to dabble in magic and the like.

One day he called on Mme. de Créquy in triumphant glee. "Well, aunt, I have seen him—I have seen the devil."

"At Montmartre again, my dear fellow? And how are you after it?"

"It was on Friday night last, aunt, at the Duc de Chartres', and Mme. de Bouillé wept like a waterspout."

And Lauzun gave his aunt a serious and simple account of how the thing was done. A crystal cup was placed on a table, and in it floated a toad which had been blessed by all the sacraments of the Church, from Baptism to Extreme Unction.

"Ordination and Confirmation! What are you saying?" exclaimed Mme. de Créquy.

"Why, my dear aunt," said Lauzun, with a touch of bitter and melancholy scorn, "do you think the Duc de Chartres cannot command the sacred and sacrilegious hands of a Bishop?"

A blasphemous ceremony of conjuration ensued ; everyone was desired to kneel, but Lauzun refused, saying that kneeling always made him faint. The Duc de Chartres obeyed, and the rest followed his example.

"Then, at the further end of the room, a naked figure of a man appeared, without a sound and in an inexplicable way. It was rather larger than life, with a fine pale complexion, wonderfully black eyes, and a thick curling beard. . . . This diabolic figure had a scar starting from his forehead and winding in a spiral down to the left heel, like a skein of bright crimson silk. The apparition ended with an exclamation in a loud and sonorous voice which seemed to proceed from the demon's wide-open mouth, but no movement of the lips was to be seen."

Lauzun would never tell Mme. de Créquy what Satan had said; but she learned from the Duchesse de Gesvres, to whom M. de Caylus told everything, that he spoke these words, with an emphasis that gave them meaning: "Victory and ruin—Victory and ruin—ruin."[1]

The Comte de Caylus fell a victim to his mania for proselytizing. His friend, the Duchesse de Gesvres, wished to have an interview with Bertrand du Guesclin to question him as to a certain treasure buried in the ground on one of her estates. But to call up Bertrand du Guesclin, it was necessary that she should be initiated, and Mme. de Gesvres had scruples of conscience as to this ceremony. M. de Caylus at last told her that he had obtained the permission of the Grand Copt for Mme. de Gesvres to be present at the raising of the Spirit of Metals, without compelling the lady to take any oaths. The ceremony was to

[1] Mme. de Créquy's *Souvenirs*, vol. iv.

take place in the Rue du Faubourg St. Honoré at the house of Mme. du Brunoi, who was at Barèges.

At midnight the Duchesse and M. de Caylus were admitted with much mystery of pass-words, etc. Mme. de Gesvres, much alarmed, wished to draw back and retrace her steps. "Impossible," said her guide. "It is too late ; and above all do not speak ; it is a matter of life or death." They went into some splendidly lighted rooms ; in one of these was a meeting of many adepts, but in order to enter, it was necessary to walk over a large crucifix laid across the threshold.

A man dressed in a long robe, half of black velvet and half of sky-blue satin, took Mme. de Gesvres' hand to lead her in. "What do you take me for?" cried she. 'Do you suppose that I will trample on the Crucifix like a Dutch trader? Do not touch me!" and thereupon, seized with horrible fright, she fled down the corridors and at last reached the garden and the street, as she happened to know the house well. That very night she took to her bed with an attack of fever of which she nearly died.

The adventure ended yet more disastrously for M. de Caylus. It was known next day that he had been seized with an apoplectic stroke at the Duc de Lauzun's little house in the Rue du Roule, near the Champs Elysées, and had died there. He was buried without any inquiry being made. How had Lauzun become involved in this miserable business? What part had he played? These are questions we cannot undertake to answer.

CHAPTER XX.

1785.

Birth of the Duc de Normandie—The affair of the necklace—Arrest of the Cardinal de Rohan—Indignation and intrigues of the Rohan family—The Cardinal is acquitted—Scandals about the Queen—Death of the Duc de Choiseul.

The year 1785 opened under the happiest auspices. Everyone rejoiced at the prospect of another birth in the Royal family. Gaiety prevailed at Court; the "Barber of Seville" and the "Marriage of Figaro" were first performed there, and some new entertainment was daily invented to amuse the Queen. No anxiety was felt as to the future: it would be impossible to rush on a precipice with more complete heedlessness. On March 27 a prince was born; everyone was delighted, and the King, in proof of his satisfaction, bought the palace of St. Cloud of the Duc d'Orléans for twelve million francs, and made it a present to the young mother.

This splendid gift, made out of pure good nature, was ill-timed; the populace, who for some years had heard complaints of the emptiness of the treasury, and had been more and more heavily taxed to fill it,

were exasperated at such a moment being chosen for so useless an outlay. Marie Antoinette was stigmatized with a nickname which subsequently aggravated their hatred—that of *Madame Déficit.* And the year 1785, which had begun so brightly, ended disastrously for the unhappy Queen and the monarchy.

An incident, as improbable as it was unexpected, agitated the Court and town alike in the month of August. Since his return from Vienna the Cardinal de Rohan was in utter disfavour; the Queen especially missed no opportunity of showing her hostile feeling.

The Cardinal, who was surrounded by spies, now became the victim of an extraordinary machination. An adventuress, who announced herself to be a descendant of the Valois, a Mme. de La Mothe, made him believe that the Queen greatly desired to possess a diamond necklace which had been offered her at the price of 1,600,000 francs (£64,000) by Boehmer and Bossang, Court jewellers, but that she dared not buy it openly. She assured the Cardinal that if he would act as go-between, he would certainly be reinstated in the Sovereign's good graces. The unsuspicious prelate agreed to play the part; he bought the necklace in the Queen's name, and handed it over to Mme. de La Mothe. At the same time the adventuress arranged meetings at night, in the Park of Versailles, between the Cardinal and a woman named Oliva, whom he took to be the Queen herself, as she somewhat resembled her. When the jewellers, tired of waiting for their 1,600,000 francs, the price of the

necklace, brought their claim to the King, the whole business was discovered. It was at once supposed to be a trick on the part of the Cardinal, who was over head and ears in debt—no one believed that he was the dupe.

M. de Vergennes advised that the business should be hushed up, and M. de Rohan compelled to compensate the jewellers. This, of course, was the wisest plan, the only reasonable course to take. But the Queen was indignant at the villainous part ascribed to her ; strong in conscious innocence, she was eager to assert it before all the world, not reflecting that the scandal would be all the greater from the publicity which must be given to the whole affair.

On the day of the Assumption, a high festival, the Cardinal de Rohan was wending his way at noon to the Chapel of the Palace, in his rochet and hood, before assuming his pontifical and official vestments in the presence of the Royal family, when he was sent for to the King's private room. There, before the Queen, M. de Breteuil, and the Keeper of the Seals, he was compelled to confess himself guilty. On leaving he was arrested by the Captain of the guard, and at once taken to the Bastille.

The scandal was terrible. A Rohan, a Cardinal, arrested in the very palace ! At first everybody supposed that he had been imprisoned for debt. What was the public feeling when the truth was suspected, and the Queen's name was mentioned in connection with this wretched business, a mere vulgar and contemptible swindle ! The outcry was

universal, and no one approved of the King's action. The clergy complained of the imprisonment of a dignitary of the Church, the nobles were indignant at an outrage on one of their order. As to the Rohan family, still very powerful, they were all flame and fury; Mme. de Marsan "raved like a devil." The Rohans, the Soubises, and the Guéménées all went into mourning.

At the same time Mme. de La Mothe was also arrested, at Bar-sur-Aube; and Cagliostro and his wife, involved in the business by their intimacy with the prelate, were thrown into the Bastille.

In the early days of his imprisonment the Cardinal enjoyed perfect liberty, excepting only that of going out of the place. He entertained much as he had done at the Hôtel de Soubise; he continued to govern his diocese, and performed various ecclesiastical functions with much splendour, officiating still as High Almoner. His family and friends, meanwhile, were not idle; they neglected nothing that might influence public opinion and excite interest in the prisoner. The Abbé Georgel carried audacity so far as to have a mandate printed and displayed on the doors of all sacristies and chapels attached to the High Almoner's charge—even on that of the Chapel Royal—in which he compared M. de Rohan to Saint Paul in bondage.

And while they thus endeavoured to make the Cardinal popular with the public—which he had never been—the families of Rohan, Soubise, and Guéménée took every opportunity of attacking the

Queen. The populace obeyed the impetus; ribald songs were sung in the streets:—

"His Holiness had made him red,
The King and Queen have blackened him,
The Parlement will wash him white;
Alleluia!"

At Longchamps straw hats were worn with a scarlet crown and edged with a ribbon of the same colour. Cardinal on the straw. Snuff-boxes were sold, *au Cardinal blanchi*, of ivory, with a small black spot in the middle.

To what authority was the Cardinal to be handed over? To an Ecclesiastical Court or to the Parlement? M. de Vergennes, always well-advised, pronounced positively for the ecclesiastical tribunal. But it was decided that he should be tried by the Parlement, which included a great many of the Cardinal's friends and relations. From that moment the Rohans did all they could to bribe those judges whose opinion they feared; to this end they scattered money lavishly and hesitated at nothing to secure their case. "The women," says Mme. de Campan, "played a part disgraceful to morality; through them, and the large sums of money they had bestowed, the oldest and wisest heads were corrupted in their judgment."

When the Cardinal came up for the preliminary inquiry he was dressed in a long violet robe—violet being Cardinal's mourning—his scarlet cap and stockings, and displayed all his Orders. Cagliostro appeared in a green coat embroidered with gold;

his hair plaited from the top of his head fell in little tails over his shoulders. To the question: "Who are you? Where do you come from?" he replied, "A noble, travelling." He undertook his own defence with an air of confidence, in a mingled jargon of Greek, Arabic, Latin and Italian. His appearance, his gestures and eagerness, amused his judges as much as his harangue. On May 30, 1786, the Cardinal stood his trial by the Parlement. All the families of Rohan, Guéménée, and Soubise stood in a row at the door of the Court. When the judges came in Mme. de Marsan stepped forward and addressed them: "Gentlemen," said she, "you are about to try all of us." The summing up by the public prosecutor was received with hooting, for the public was represented solely by the Cardinal's family and partisans. Sentence was pronounced on May 31, at nine in the evening. By a majority of three—twenty-six to twenty-three—the Cardinal was simply acquitted, as were Cagliostro and the woman Oliva; Mme. de La Mothe was condemned to be whipped and imprisoned at La Salpétrière.

The Palace of Justice was packed with people. As soon as the verdict was announced enthusiastic cheers greeted the judges; they had such a reception as they came out that they could scarcely get through the throng. The mob surrounding the building made the air ring with applause and shouts of delight. The Cardinal stepped into a carriage with the Governor of the Bastille, and was escorted

to the prison by an immense crowd cheering him vociferously. The scene was repeated next day when he came out of the Bastille. His hotel was illuminated, he was called out on to the balcony like a conquering hero; the market women came to congratulate him.

It was not that the Cardinal was loved; but hatred of the Queen was already so strong that the slightest pretext was seized on for attacking her. Every demonstration in the Cardinal's favour was an insult to Marie Antoinette. For indeed, whereas the Cardinal was acquitted, there was another innocent person who suffered, and very cruelly, under the sentence of the Court; that was the Queen, and the blow that struck her struck at the monarchy.

Marie Antoinette was keenly alive to the insult, and felt it deeply. She wrote to Mme. de Polignac these words of anguish: "Come and weep with me, come and comfort your friend, my dear Polignac. The verdict just pronounced is an intolerable affront. I am drowned in tears of grief and despair. It is impossible to hope for anything where perversity seems bent on finding every means of galling my spirit. Such ingratitude! But I will triumph over the malignant by doing three times as much good as I have always tried to do. They will find it easier to grieve me than to make me revenge myself. Come, my dear heart."

The Cardinal did not long rejoice in his triumph. On the day after his return to his episcopal residence

he was banished to La Chaise-Dieu. The King dismissed him from his office of High Almoner, and stripped him of his appointments and pensions, as he had formerly done to the Cardinal's nephew, the Prince de Guéménée. Then the cry arose of "Tyranny!" and the higher nobility was furious at what it called Royal despotism. It was in vain that Mme. de Marsan came to throw herself at the Queen's feet, in vain besought the King to allow the Cardinal, who was ill, to go to some watering-place; she could obtain nothing. She withdrew in exasperation, vowing never to appear again in the royal presence.

From this time forth the Queen had no more virulent enemies than the Rohans, and all who were more or less closely connected with that powerful family. "The Queen's character is not quit of the collar!"—(the necklace—*franc du collier*)—Mme. de Coigny said, and the witticism was repeated in the drawing-rooms of the Palais Royal and throughout Paris. When the Queen appeared in the capital she was received so coldly that she could not restrain her tears, and exclaimed: "Why, what harm have I done them?" Animosity ran so high that to avoid coarse insult her portrait had to be withdrawn from the exhibition of painting at the *Salon*.

In the course of the year 1785 a man who has figured largely in this narrative vanished from the world. The Duc de Choiseul died in the month of May. He had persisted for many years in his extravagant style of living, spending without keeping

any account, and adding every day to the sum total of his debts. Happily for him a sudden illness snatched him away in middle life, and prevented his witnessing his own ruin. In May, 1785, he was attacked by an inflammation of the lungs which from the first showed very serious symptoms. Paris was at once in a state of excitement, all his friends, all his partisans, all who ever hoped for his reinstatement at the head of affairs, rushed to inquire after him. The Comtesse de Brionne, the Duc du Châtelet, and the Prince de Beaumont, with other fine ladies and gentlemen, were constantly at his bedside. Lauzun, forgetting their past dissensions, and all his grievances against his uncle, went at once to show his relations every mark of attachment and devotion. All the most distinguished personages of the town crowded the approaches to the house. "Four secretaries," says Bachaumont, "were constantly occupied in writing bulletins; the throng was immense, and strict etiquette was necessarily observed: first and second ante-room, drawing-room, bed-room, each visitor was admitted in order of privilege to these different rooms; only the elect entered the last." The Queen sent a page several times a day to ask for news.

Unfortunately the crowd of doctors was equally great: there were eleven of them. The Duchesse nursed her husband with devoted care, but all in vain. Feeling his end draw near, Choiseul sent for four notaries, and to them, with perfect calmness, he dictated his last wishes. His death was worthy of his character and of his life; he saw the final moment

at hand without trepidation, and suggested consolation to all about him. "To his dying moment he had an air of granting an audience, and made a lordly end."

He died on Sunday, May 9, 1785. The funeral service was held on the 11th at his parish church of Saint Eustache. "Never was a more numerous and splendid following," says Bachaumont. "No end of blue ribands, and red ribands, and foreign Orders; old men bent under the weight of years seemed about to step into their own graves when they had paid the last honours to the dead."

The grief at Choiseul's death was not, however, unanimous. Ministers and men in office were glad to feel themselves delivered from a powerful presence, hindering, or publicly disapproving, all they did. He was the centre of a sphere in which they were not at their ease.

The King's dislike to him was well-known and gave rise to this epitaph:—

> "Here Choiseul lies in peace! 'A happy thing!'
> Says in a whisper our most Christian King."

The day after her husband's death the Duchesse de Choiseul retired to the Convent of the Cordelières in the Rue du Bac with a single servant. She gave up all her splendour, and devoted her whole income to paying off her husband's debts.[1]

[1] See *La Duchesse de Choiseul*, by Gaston Maugras, Paris, 1889.

CHAPTER XXI.

1785—1787.

Lauzun and Mme. de Coigny—The Prince de Ligne—Mme. de Fleury—The adventure of the rose—Two duels—The King affronts the Marquis de Conflans—M. de Conflans' death—The Palais Royal faction—The Duc d'Orléans and Mme. de Buffon.

LAUZUN'S love affairs with Mme. de Coigny had meanwhile remained as they were: political intrigue had done nothing to advance them. Nor was he the only man to lavish attentions on Mme. de Coigny. The young Marquise, fascinating, full of charm and wit, was the centre of such homage as could not fail to flatter her vanity; she was far from scorning a whole Court of adorers; and though Lauzun was no doubt the most favoured of them, and she showed him particular regard, it was not without a pang that he saw her the object of other men's assiduities; he feared lest some happier or bolder rival should find his way to the heart which he hoped to win, and jealousy often tormented him cruelly.

Among the gentlemen whose attentions to the Marquise caused him so much anxiety may be mentioned the Duc de Chartres, the Chevalier de

l'Isle, and the Prince de Ligne. M. de Ligne was the rival he chiefly dreaded, and he was in fact a dangerous one.

The Prince, himself a man of great wit, loved wit in others ; he had a genuine passion for the Marquise. Every time he came to Paris he spent many hours with her whom he called his *Adorée*, and our unhappy Lauzun, though he blushed to let it be seen, was often very weary of him. During his absence in Russia, and his long journey in the Crimea with the Empress Catherine, the Prince wrote the most delightful letters to Mme. de Coigny, in which he was not chary of flattery and compliments ; but, making due allowance for hyperbole, these letters give an admirable idea of the charming woman who played so large a part in our hero's life, and for that reason they may be quoted from here.

The Prince wrote to his *Adorée* from Kiov :—

"Do you know why I miss you, Madame la Marquise ? It is because you are not a woman like every other ; and I am not a man like every other, for I appreciate you better than those that are about you. And do you know why you are not like every other woman ? It is because you are kind, though many people do not believe it ; it is because you are simple, though you are always inventing something witty, or finding it ready made. That is your mother tongue. It cannot be said that you are witty, but that wit is you. You do not hunt for epigrams ; epigrams come to find you. Fifty years hence you will rank with Mme. du Deffant for sharpness, with Mme. Geoffrin for good sense, and with the

Maréchale de Mirepoix for good taste. You, at the age of twenty, have the accumulated results of the three centuries which make up the age of those ladies. You have the graces of a woman of fashion without having made it a profession. You are a superior woman and alarm none but simpletons. As many noble speeches as witticisms of yours are quoted. 'Never have a lover, it is an abdication,' is a very deep and very new thought. You are more apt to be embarrassed than embarrassing; and when you have a shy fit you show it in the drollest possible way, by a little, rapid murmuring flow, as people who are afraid of thieves sing in the street. You are the sweetest woman and the most charming boy, in short the person I most regret."

Another time he reminds her in the wittiest way of his adoration and the train of admirers he had left surrounding her :—

"From my Galley.

"Such is fate, Madame la Marquise. I left you in the midst of a dozen adorers who do not understand you ; I, who do understand you, shall not hear you for many a day. Here am I, twelve hundred leagues away from your charms, but always near your bright wit, which constantly recurs to my memory. I can see you sending one of those gentlemen to order your carriage, getting out of patience at the account another gives you of his own, pelting another with epigrams and raillery, allowing a fourth to escort you to the play, encouraging a fifth in his hopeless devotion, not quenching an ardent suitor

who mistakes his own violence for passion, and who hopes to captivate you by telling you that he makes his regiment leap trenches ; I see you laying yourself out to please one or two who can understand you, spending your wit to no advantage on others—but in all this I do not see that your heart is at stake. Two of your worshippers vainly creep on all fours to convince you of the love they feel for you ; an ear-tip betrays them as lovable rather than loving. If by dint of acting amiability and goodness they do not ere long get into mischief remember me to them."

These two worshippers who crawl on all fours and may perhaps get into mischief are, we fear, none others than Lauzun and the Duc de Chartres.

On another occasion, the Prince, to keep up his part of lover, writes as follows :—

"I say nothing to you of the state of my heart. Yours is put up for a lottery. I have taken a ticket. Who knows? And even if I had not, might not chance favour me by prevention?" M. de Ligne's letters are full of declarations and compliments; he writes to the Marquise of the fire of her eyes, the fire of her imagination. "In all Paris," he says, "you are the only person to adore ; adore is the word, for there is not time there for love. You alone know how to be brilliant without fatiguing, and I ascribe this gift to no one else, not even to the stars." And his love for her will cease only with his life, he pledges his word for it. "Till I step into Charon's bark I can never cease to love you and to tell you so."

The Prince certainly did not share the new ideas

which had fired the French nobility with such rash enthusiasm. So he was far from approving of Mme. de Coigny's theories of politics, and on that point they differed as widely as possible.

"Ask forgiveness of your pedantic foes to abuses,' he writes. "I am an abuse of this country, and I am none the worse for it, nor are other folks. Our abuses of good, genuine monarchies serve a good turn to many people; and if they were to be suppressed you would have Pugatcheffs instead. From which Heaven preserve you!"

It is easy to imagine that so effusive a devotion should cause our hero some anxiety; but happily M. de Ligne was almost always absent, sometimes in Belgium, in Austria, or in Russia, and his tenderness exhaled itself in letter-writing. Lauzun, though still very devoted, and though his heart was immutably given to the fascinating Marquise, began to be a little tired of dancing attendance on her, and fate at this juncture offered him the chance of a more facile flirtation.

The heroine of this episode was the Marquise de Fleury, Mme. de Coigny's first cousin.[1] She had been married, December 5th, 1784, at the age of fifteen, to the Marquis de Fleury, who was but fourteen. The young husband had allowed himself to be led into such ruinous extravagance that he was

[1] Françoise Aimée Franquetot de Coigny, daughter of the Comte de Coigny, the Duc's younger brother. Her father-in-law died in 1788, and she then became the Duchesse de Fleury. See the "Duc de Lauzun and the Court of Louis XV.," chapter xxi.

presently put under tutelage. As to his wife, an eager and romantic creature, she soon was a good deal talked about.

She was, indeed, singularly beautiful and highly gifted. No woman could be more bewitching, alike from her graces of person and of mind. "Her face was lovely," writes Mme. Vigée-Lebrun, "her look a flame, her figure such as we give to Venus, and her mind superior." With a lively imagination, and a lofty soul, she was gentle and natural; but a certain dreaminess, and an independent, adventurous spirit, led her into eccentricities. Among a thousand instances one may be quoted, a breach of etiquette so audacious as to set all the tongues at Court wagging. "She was at supper one evening at Versailles in Mme. de Guéménée's rooms, where, as usual, there were a great many people. Mme. de Fleury had just come from the Queen's circle, and was in full Court dress. Instead of taking off her train of several ells in length in the ante-room, she unfastened it in the drawing-room. Mme. de Guéménée laughingly advised her to take off her huge hoops. 'By all means!' replied Mme. de Fleury. At this unexpected reply several ladies rushed at her to encourage her to commit this piece of folly; they took off her hoops, her skirt of splendid brocade: in the winking of an eye they had partly undressed her, and she stood in her long waist and fur cape, and her short stuff petticoat, with her two pockets hanging from her waist. All this took place in the presence of fifty bystanders, and Mme. de Fleury remained in this

strange costume the whole evening, from half-past nine till two in the morning, with the most perfect unconcern, and as if she had done the most natural thing in the world." [1]

She was known in her family by the name of Nigretta, on account of her dark complexion and black hair and eyes. But she did not like it and assumed another, which better suited her taste and aspirations. She had taken a passionate delight in reading the "Lettres d'une Péruvienne," by Mme. de Graffigny, and the heroine's name, Zilia, daughter of the Sun, which was worshipped in Peru, so charmed her romantic fancy, that she adopted it.

At her cousin's house she met Lauzun in a very dejected frame of mind, and intimated her liking; he probably thought that a little jealousy might promote his interests, and set up a flirtation which she was very ready to encourage. They met at Lauzun's house at Montrouge, and both being bitten with the folly of the *illuminati* they vowed to worship the moon, and adored the Queen of the Night at Montrouge.

Mme. de Coigny did not fail to perceive Lauzun's intimacy with her cousin, but very wisely, as a clever woman who after all had no claim on him, she affected ignorance. And indeed the attachment, if violent, was ephemeral. The fair Zilia soon tired of Lauzun and took up with some new friend.

The Marquis de Coigny had always been on good terms with his wife, but they lived a good deal apart,

[1] *Souvenirs de Mme. de Genlis.*

for the Marquis had remained faithful to the traditions of his father and his mother-in-law, who were in the highest favour with the intimate circle about the King and Queen: thus he and his wife did not move in the same society.

Mme. de Coigny had been in the habit of using a seal representing a full-blown rose surrounded by a swarm of bees and butterflies, with this motto, "What it is to be a rose." This rose, she used to say, was an image of herself, the bees and butterflies were the legion of admirers in her train. She gave this seal to Lauzun, and whether, to use the Prince de Ligne's phrase, he "won the lottery," or no, from 1786 they were greater friends than ever.

In January, 1786, two duels were fought which made a great talk, and in which M. and Mme. de Coigny were concerned.

M. de Coigny had, at the new year, made Mme. de Valentinois a present of a trained parrot of distinguished abilities. Unfortunately Prince Joseph de Monaco was no less her devoted admirer, and he too brought her a New Year's gift—a wonderful monkey who could do everything but talk. But the first thing the monkey did was to catch the parrot and pluck it so effectually that it died. The Marquis de Coigny, much annoyed, challenged the Prince of Monaco, and they fought a duel in which the Marquis was severely wounded. A few days later Mme. de Coigny was indirectly the cause of the second duel. Being obliged to appear at Court on some great occasion, she was walking in the gallery at Versailles

when she dropped a rose. Comte Roger de Damas picked it up and amused himself with pulling off the petals over a table where a game with dice called *crabs* or *creps* was being played. The Comte de Broglie begged him not to do it as he was incommoding the players, and "nothing could be more stupid than what he was doing." M. de Damas retorted that "nothing could be more stupid than what he was saying." They fought, and M. de Broglie was wounded.

New Year's day, 1786, was not lucky for the Coigny family. The Marquise's father, M. de Conflans, had asked to be decorated with the Royal Orders.[1] Not only did Louis XVI. refuse to bestow them on him; he was even so brutal as to say to this venerable Colonel of Hussars when he claimed this reward: "It must be admitted, Conflans, that you want the blue riband, for you look like a locksmith." This was in allusion to M. de Conflans' dress, consisting of a plain coat, and hair cut short, without powder or pomatum. But it was unbecoming in the King to make such a remark. Mme. de Coigny could not forgive this fresh and cruel affront, which aggravated her detestation of the Court.

M. de Conflans died not long after. He knew himself to have a mortal disease and to be liable to die suddenly, but, like all the men of his time, he would not admit that he was ill, and went into society as usual. On the day of his death he was to dine at Montrouge with the Duc de Lauzun, to meet the Duc d'Orléans —whom we have hitherto known as the Duc de

[1] The Orders of Saint Michael and of the Holy Ghost.

Chartres[1]—and some other persons. Everybody had arrived but M. de Conflans. They awaited him with impatience, especially the Duc d'Orléans, who wished to go to the theatre. Suddenly one of M. de Conflans' servants arrived in great haste to announce his master's death. At this unexpected news the whole party, and Lauzun most of all, were greatly shocked and upset. Only the Duc d'Orléans coolly said: "Well, Lauzun, since there is no one to wait for, let us have dinner, that we may get in at the beginning of the Opera." For five and twenty years he had been on terms of intimacy with M. de Conflans. If the anecdote is true, it is little to the credit of the Duke's feelings; but it is told by Talleyrand, and therefore quite open to suspicion.

Lauzun at once left his friends to themselves and hurried off to offer Mme. de Coigny the consolations of faithful and tender friendship. Her father's death broke the last tie that held Mme. de Coigny to the Court. From that hour she considered herself released from all need for reticence; she became the irreconcilable foe of the Court circle at Versailles—what she so haughtily termed the *aristocratic rabble*—and stirred up a violent opposition. Her pugnacious temper found satisfaction in this declared hostility, and she henceforth held a supreme place in every drawing-room where *philosophes*, politicians and economists were to be found. As in the progress of events matters assumed a more serious aspect, she

[1] The old Duc d'Orléans died in November, 1785. His son, hitherto the Duc de Chartres, had succeeded to the title.

became even more violent and aggressive. Her fierce and pitiless opinions of the Court, her biting and cruel speeches about the Queen, were the delight of Paris *salons*, and repeated from one to another. One of her uncles, the Chevalier de Coigny, fearing that he might be compromised by his niece's indiscretions, reproved her one day sharply enough. The Marquise only replied disdainfully: "Could you not give me all that in little pills?" and turned her back upon him.

The Palais Royal was still the focus of the most ardent opposition, the centre to which all rallied who aimed at undermining Royal authority. Mme. de Coigny queened it there by her wit and high spirits, but the Duc d'Orléans, who at one time seemed anxious to lay siege to her affections, desisted from the pursuit; he found consolation elsewhere, and his life from 1787 became completely influenced by a *liaison* with Mme. de Buffon,[1] who inspired him with a real passion. She was young and pretty, and violently in love with him. Though not clever, she had grace, sweetness, and great charm. She sacrificed to the man she loved her position in the world by deserting her husband and publicly acknowledging her connection with the Duke. Her fortune was very small; the Duc d'Orléans never added to it. She lived quietly on her modest income. Mme. de Buffon's disinterested devotion to the Prince won the

[1] Mlle. de Cepoy, who had married in 1784 Louis Marie, Comte de Buffon, Colonel of Cavalry, son of the famous naturalist. M. de Buffon was guillotined in 1794.

esteem and affection of all who knew her. As to the Prince, he thought of no one else; he took her out driving every day, and to the theatre every evening. He loved her sincerely and passionately, and she had the greatest influence over him. Thenceforth no disreputable person was ever seen at Mousseaux; none were admitted there.

CHAPTER XXII.

1787—1788.

The first Treaty of Commerce—The English in Egypt—Lauzun's remarkable foresight—M. d'Ormesson—M. de Calonne—Assembly of Notables—Mme. de Coigny's parrot—Loménie de Brienne—The Notables are dismissed—The Duc d'Orléans in banishment—Retrenchments—Indignation at Court—Mme. de Polignac's ingratitude—Mme. d'Ossun—Necker succeeds to Brienne—Death of Maréchal de Biron—Lauzun takes his name as Duc de Biron.

DURING the years 1786 and 1787 Lauzun had not remained idle. He had made frequent journeys to England on more or less confidential missions. Still, being desirous of diplomatic advancement, he even wrote to the King to beg to be appointed as Ambassador to London, but Louis XVI. did not vouchsafe a reply. This did not hinder the Duc from remaining in correspondence with the Ministers, to whom he did signal service, for he kept them informed of what was going on in London. He even took an active part in drawing up the first treaty of commerce which ever was concluded.

This treaty, between France and England, was signed in 1786. It was the economists' permit for the commerce of the two countries, and was concluded for

ten years. It would have proved disastrous for several of the French industries if the Revolution had not intervened to break it off. And yet it was very ill-received by Fox's party in England. To show the aversion felt for it, Lord George Gordon, at the head of an immense crowd of people, marched in grand procession to the French Embassy, in front of which a copy of the treaty was burned. He had had the politeness that morning to let the Ambassador know that there was nothing to be afraid of, as they would not burn his residence.[1]

In 1787 fresh difficulties arose between Turkey and Russia: the Empress Catherine wished to end her reign on the throne of Constantinople. Many French courtiers at once applied to be allowed to serve in the Russian army; the Duc de Richelieu, the Comte de Damas, the Comte de Bombelles, etc. Napoleon Bonaparte, a subaltern artillery officer, wrote to offer his services to General Tamara. There was a general enthusiasm for the Russians.

Though Lauzun had a great admiration for Catherine, and had several times made plans for serving in the Russian army, he foresaw with remarkable perspicuity the dangers in which this war would involve us.

From August, 1787, till July, 1788, he wrote letter after letter to M. de Montmorin, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, to point out the risk to our influence

[1] No mention is made of this proceeding in the notice of Lord George Gordon in the "Dictionary of National Biography," nor have I found any account of it elsewhere.—*Translator.*

in the East, to explain to him that we ought not to abandon Egypt, and exhort him to take the necessary measures. These letters are highly remarkable, and might have been written yesterday. They are unfortunately too long to be reproduced here, and we can only give an epitome of their contents.[1]

The great source of Lauzun's anxiety is the behaviour of England. He is persuaded of the duplicity of the English, who are prompting Turkey to fight, and who, as soon as war is declared, will lend their aid to Russia. They will then take advantage of the situation to seize Egypt, and this must be hindered at any cost. He writes to M. de Montmorin, August 30, 1787: —

"The possession of Egypt will give England the command of the shortest route to India, secure to her the whole trade with the East, and make her ere long mistress of half the world. If the English were in possession of India, trade would be so ruinous for all the other European Powers that they would be obliged to surrender it. Egypt often attracted the attention of M. le Duc de Choiseul ; the acquisition of that magnificent and productive country was his favourite scheme, the political romance which most often occupied his day-dreams."

Lauzun is not content to point out the danger ; he also suggests the remedy. In his opinion there is a very simple way of forefending the risk that threatens.

It is to uphold the Turks by undertaking to protect for them, and at their expense, Egypt, Candia, Rhodes,

[1] They are to be found in the National archives, T 1527.

and Cyprus; they can then avail themselves of all their forces to fight the Russians. By acting thus we risk absolutely nothing; for if the Ottoman Empire should be conquered, we should keep the property we have in charge. Lauzun offers to go to Constantinople and lay this plan before M. de Choiseul-Gouffier, our Ambassador. That the Turks will consent is certain.

But, it is objected, supposing this should entail a war with England?

"I venture to assert," he writes, "that we must rather go to war with England than allow England to hold Egypt. If you read through the despatches of M. le Comte de Choiseul-Gouffier, the King's Ambassador at Constantinople, you will easily convince yourself of the enormous importance of Egypt, and the necessity of rescuing it, at any cost, from the avidity of the English. It is impossible to doubt any longer that the English have hidden designs on Egypt, which they will promote by every imaginable intrigue." And he adds this remark, which has been heard in our own day, in the House of Commons:—

"England is less formidable than is supposed. Her vast commerce prevents her ever being ready for war; every preparation is ruinous and destructive to her trade; and at the beginning of every war, her sailors—her one element of strength—being scattered, as they are, over every sea, she is for a long time reduced to ineffectual efforts" (September 5, 1787).

September 16, Lauzun writes again to M. de Montmorin. He believes that the permission to occupy Egypt may be got from England by mere persuasion. He asks that an envoy extraordinary should be sent to London, where, at the moment, there was no ambassador to discuss the matter. If England should refuse, we must declare war : this is the *delenda Carthago* which invariably recurs in all his letters.

Notwithstanding frequent interviews, and constantly increasing urgency, Lauzun could not persuade Montmorin to follow his advice. The truth was that domestic matters of a more pressing kind did not allow the Ministers to think of foreign affairs or future issues.

When Necker retired from office in 1781 to the regret of all, his place was filled by Joly de Fleury ; he, however, did not hold it long ; his successor was M. d'Ormesson. His tenure of the office of Controller-General was equally brief. One day there was a vehement scene between him and M. de Vaudreuil, on the subject of Mme de Polignac's debts. To M. d'Ormesson's refusal to pay them M. de Vaudreuil replied, as he left the room : " Well, Monsieur, if you will not, somebody else will."

" From this moment M d'Ormesson was attacked, but mildly," writes the Comte de Cassin to the Duc d'Harcourt, " and even this would not have come at once but that he also refused to disburse fourteen millions for Rambouillet, fifteen millions for the Comte d'Artois, six for the Duc de Provence, five or six more for something else, besides six hundred

thousand a year to Monsieur, and four hundred thousand to the Comte d'Artois. His next step was to pass an Order in Council to reform the system of farming taxes. The Farmers-General were then banished; they were made to render an account; the Queen must need interfere, M. de Vaudreuil followed the matter up, the King got angry, and he dismissed an honest man who was too clumsy for the country. M. de Vaudreuil insisted that M. de Calonne should be appointed; M. de Polignac's circle were frantic about it, the Queen would have it, the King resisted, the Queen had a miscarriage and M. de Calonne was appointed."

M. de Calonne had all the characteristics of a man of the world; he was fickle, brilliant, witty, amiable and incurably frivolous. With good looks, a keen and discriminating eye, a fine figure and a pleasant tone of voice, he was also a man of great elegance. His powers of work were considerable, but he had no morals. He was over head and ears in debt. "He owes money to God, to the devil and to men," wrote a contemporary. He had been for some time on the watch for this post of Controller-General, which he thought a tempting morsel. At the time of Necker's overthrow he hoped to get it, but Maurepas had said: "What next; why, he is a madman, a spendthrift! Put the finances into his hands? The royal treasury would soon be as empty as his purse."

Then Calonne turned to the Polignac faction, to whom he promised largesse and marvels, and who procured his appointment, October 3, 1783. Once

safe in his place Calonne proved himself a man of honour, in so far as that he faithfully kept the promises he had made. He gave profusely to every one: to the Queen, to the King's brothers, to the Queen's favourites. His system was to borrow and again to borrow, and save the present at the cost of the future. When the deficit was appalling he thought he could get out of the scrape by proposing that an Assembly of Notables should be called.

It was more than a century and a half since a King of France had been known to convoke so important a council. The great nobles, the first judges, the richest landowners, were invited to give their opinion on the principal questions of administration and the reforms to be introduced. The Notables were of course weeded with jealous care, and a good deal of fun was made of them. One day at Mme. de Coigny's, M. de X—— persisting in trying to make her parrot talk, "Do not waste your pains," said she, "he never speaks."—"What! you have a parrot which cannot speak! Get one which can at least say 'Vive le Roi!'"—"Heaven forbid!" replied the Marquise, "I should lose it at once; it would be taken to make a Notable."

There were a hundred and forty-four of these Notables; they were divided into sections, each presided over by a prince of the Royal Family or a prince of the Blood. In the section presided over by the Comte d'Artois thirteen voted against two, for demanding of the King that the deputies of the third estate (*tiers état*) should equal in number

the other two combined. It is well to remember the names of these bold innovators: first our old friend the Archbishop of Narbonne, then the Ducs de Mortemart, de La Rochefoucauld, du Châtelet, de Beauvau, the Comtes de Rochambeau, de Montboissier and a few others.

From the first matters looked badly for the Controller-General; he was very soon persuaded to send in his resignation, April 8, 1787, and was banished to his estate of Allonville in Lorraine. Then, the Parlement having condemmed him to be imprisoned, he escaped to London.

His immediate successor was Loménie de Brienne, the Archbishop of Toulouse. The choice was not a happy one. Before this, at the death of Mgr. de Beaumont, he had been spoken of for the Archbishopric of Paris; but the King would not hear of him, by reason of his bad reputation and irreligious views: "The Archbishop of Paris must at least believe in God," Louis XVI. had very judiciously remarked. Nevertheless, on May 1, 1787, the Archbishop of Toulouse was appointed head of the Department of Finance. He had no views, no solid knowledge, no ideas, no plan.

By the end of May the Assembly of Notables was dismissed without having achieved any of the projected reforms, but the great word States-General had been spoken, and from that moment it constantly recurred. Money, meanwhile, must be had by fair means or foul; it could only be procured by raising a loan. This loan must be a legalized act. Nothing

could be easier. An attempt was made to pass it by surprise. A Royal hunt was announced with much ceremony for November 19, and a Bed of Justice was convened with great secrecy for the same day.

On November 19, the King came, in fact, to Paris. He appeared before his Parlement, opened the sitting, and proposed two edicts: one inviting Protestants to return to the country; the other asking a loan of 420,000,000 francs, to be raised within four years.

Counsellor Freteau and the Abbé Sabatier de Cabre spoke in succession, both in violent opposition to the loan. The discussion lasted some time, till the King simply and uncompromisingly ordered that the decree should be passed. But then the Duc d'Orléans rose and represented to the King that an open sitting thus ending in a Bed of Justice was illegal, and he placed his protest in the hands of the Parlement.

The honours of the day all fell to the Prince. When he went back to his carriage, the populace, who had besieged every street leading to the Palais, cheered him with frantic applause.

On the following day the Abbé Sabatier was banished to Mont Saint-Michel, M. Freteau to the Château of Doullens, and the Duc d'Orléans to Villers-Cotterets. The unpleasant task of announcing his banishment to the Prince was laid on the Baron de Breteuil; the Duke, whatever he may have felt, made no protest; he ordered his carriage and got into it. The Baron, who in obedience to his

instructions was to accompany him, was about to get in after him when the Prince stopped him, saying: "What are you about?" The Baron showed his warrant. "Very good," said the Prince, "get up behind." And he drove off. The Baron, not allowing himself to be put out by this "light cloud" (*léger nuage*, his own words in relating the incident), got into his own carriage and followed as best he could.

As soon as the Duke's exile became known in Paris the mob rushed to the Palais Royal; the garden and the adjoining streets rang with shouts of "Vive M. le Duc d'Orléans."

The Parlement never ceased its demand for the reinstatement of the banished rebels; the public, of course, supporting it in its revolt against Royal authority.

To hinder the immense concourse of visitors who would certainly throng to Villers-Cotterets the King forbade his banished cousin to receive anybody but the members of his family; Lauzun vainly besought permission to be with his friend. The Prince was miserable at being deprived of his usual society, and his rage against the Court was aggravated by isolation. The Queen, especially, was the person he accused of the brutality with which he was treated. "These young sovereigns," he said, "will learn sooner or later that the first Prince of the Blood is not to be humiliated with impunity, and I will not go down to the dead without having made them feel it." He was bored to death in his exile, but

what chiefly grieved him was being parted from Mme. de Buffon. He was desperately in love with her, and in spite of entreaties could not prevail on the King to allow her to follow him. He then plotted to escape once a week from Villers-Cotterets, and to go as far as to Nanteuil, where she met him.

At last, by dint of importunity and the importunity of his friends, the Prince was allowed to move to le Raincy; but he was not permitted to come within two leagues of Paris. At the beginning of 1788 he still was in banishment, but in the month of May, after repeated petitions, he was authorized to go to England.

As a result of the events thus briefly sketched the Parlements and the public combined to demand the convocation of the States-General. To punish the Parlements it was decided that they should be suppressed or reconstituted. M. de Lamoignon was eager to be invested with the dignity of Chancellor in order to strike this grand blow, but for fourteen years M. de Maupeou had resisted every remonstrance and refused to give up his title as Chancellor.[1] Now again entreaties were tried, his relations and friends were worked upon, all in vain. He assembled them all and declared in the most emphatic terms that he would die Chancellor.

But the Government were forced to yield to the

[1] See *The Duc de Lauzun and the Court of Louis XV.*, chap. xvii.

pressure of public opinion, and the States-General were convoked for the month of May, 1789.

The financial situation, meanwhile, went every day from bad to worse, and the Controller-General compelled all the Court to effect considerable retrenchments. Great changes were introduced into the households of the King and Queen. The establishments for hunting the boar and the wolf, the falconry, the King's private falcons, the guards at the doors inside the palace, etc., were suppressed. The Queen dismissed her gambling staff, cut down the expenses of her stables, of her private table, and her dress. The Royal pair had now but one table. Many appointments were abolished, and all pensions were reduced. The courtiers who thus lost fat sinecures were excessively wroth. The House of Noailles, for instance, enjoyed an income of 1,800,000 francs in pensions and royal benefactions; this was cut down to one million, and all the Noailles were deeply annoyed.

These reforms hit everybody, and the outcry was universal. What was to become of them all if they could no longer dip at pleasure into the King's treasure? What would be the end when there should be no more places, nor payments, nor pensions? "It is frightful," says Besenval, artlessly, "to live in a country where you are not sure of having to-morrow what you had yesterday. Such things exist only in Turkey."

Versailles was in despair. The sufferers at Court made the unhappy Queen responsible for all this

ruin of their fortunes. She was accused of prodigality and of despotism. Seditious pamphlets and atrocious posters stirred up the public mind to detest her. Her name was associated with those of Frédégonde, of Isabeau of Bavaria, of Catherine de Medicis. Horrible caricatures were for sale. After the affair of the diamond necklace, the foulest libels blackened her name; they inundated the town and the Court; they were posted on the doors of Nôtre Dame, and distributed by the palace servants. There was a perfect flood of calumny and abuse. Everything she did was shamefully misrepresented. Marie Antoinette showed some kindness to certain foreigners; they were at once spoken of as her lovers—Lord Strathavon, Lord Fitzgerald, the Duke of Dorset, Fersen, the Dillons and others.

Our gorge rises with disgust as we see the treatment of which this unfortunate Queen was the object. It is impossible to stigmatize too strongly the odious, contemptible conduct of this Court when it turned on a woman and did everything in its power to dishonour and humiliate her. And it must be clearly stated and never forgotten that all these infamous attacks came, not from the dregs of the people, as might be supposed; they were not the work of wretches driven to it by hunger and misery; they were inspired, composed and uttered by the Queen's immediate circle, and her own family.

Here was the Comte de Provence, furious at seeing his hopes of the throne destroyed, attacking

his sister-in-law without respite or mercy; epigrams, calumny, slander, all served his purpose; some of the atrocious libels which flooded Paris and Versailles issued from the Luxembourg Palace.

Here was the Comte d'Artois, who, after being for so long largely responsible for the Queen's dissipations, had quarrelled with her on political grounds, and now attacked her on every possible pretext, without measure or reserve.

Here was Madame Adélaide again, who, in her retirement at Belleville, hailed with ferocious joy every pamphlet, satire, double-edged gossip about her niece, and spread them liberally among the public.

And then there were the courtiers whom she had loaded with benefits, and who could never forgive her for the reforms that had impoverished them. The Rohans, the Marsans, the Guéménées, the Duc d'Aiguillon and the Duc d'Orléans, fomented public feeling and unchained its fury on this unhappy woman. Still, these were confessedly her enemies, implacable enemies, and though it is difficult to excuse their conduct, it is at least accounted for. But the others!

So it was not the mob, let it be clearly understood, that first attacked the Queen. Afterwards, indeed, the people picked up all this treacherous vilification out of the mud; but they were not the originators of it, and were almost justified in believing in its authenticity, since it came from the Court itself. "It is in the malignant lies uttered

by the Court from 1785 to 1788 against the Queen," says the Comte de La Marck, "that we find the origin of the accusations brought against Marie Antoinette by the revolutionary tribunal."

The consequences of this detestable campaign were soon perceptible. In February, 1787, the Queen was hissed as she went to the Opera. During a performance of *Athalie*, at which she was present, the audience applauded with equal vehemence and indecorum these lines spoken by Joad :—

> Frustrate, we pray, this cruel Queen's designs,
> And shed, O God, on Mathan and on her
> The spirit of imprudence and neglect
> Which warns us to expect the fall of kings.[1]

These base libels were current not only at Versailles and in Paris; they were repeated at foreign Courts. Catherine of Russia was discussing the French Court one day with the Prince de Ligne, and seemed to have some belief in these contemptible pamphlets. The Prince, much annoyed, answered with great spirit: "Madame, in the North they tell lies about the West, and in the West they tell lies about the North. You must not believe the chairmen of Versailles; it is as though the coachmen of Czarzko-Selo were to write the history of your Majesty."

Did the Queen in her reverses find some consolation at least among those who were to a great

[1] Confonds dans ses desseins cette reine cruelle !
Daigne, daigne, mon Dieu, sur Mathan et sur elle
Répandre cet esprit d'imprudence et d'erreur,
De la chute des rois funeste avant-coureur.

extent the cause of her unpopularity? By no means.

The Polignacs, who owed everything to her, never forgave her their loss of office in consequence of the retrenchments; they gradually dropped away from her, and did not spare her in their speech. The Queen still often spent the evening with her favourite, but the people she now met there did not please her; it was known that she did not like them, and they were invited all the same. She remarked upon it gently to Mme. de Polignac, who bluntly replied: "Because your Majesty condescends to come to my rooms, that is not a reason, I suppose, for excluding my friends to please your Majesty." The Queen, hurt by this ingratitude, by degrees abandoned Mme. de Polignac's salon; she then made it a habit to go to her lady-in-waiting, the Comtesse d'Ossun, a woman of no great parts, but perfectly sweet and kind, and of distinguished virtue. The Polignac faction were, of course, indignant, and scattered flames and fury as to the neglect and ingratitude of which the Queen declared herself the victim.

The financial situation grew worse and worse; Brienne was obliged to retire. The news was hailed with great rejoicings. An effigy dressed as an archbishop was burnt on the Place Dauphine; then the populace in its excitement set fire to some guard-houses. The military had to intervene, and there were wounded on both sides. The Maréchal de Biron was again made commandant of the city, and required to maintain order.

Necker stepped into Brienne's place; his reinstatement was hailed with transports of joy; a perfect delirium; now all would be well! Necker's only characteristic unfortunately was the most overweening conceit. He was incapable of doing any good; in fact he contributed greatly to the disasters that ensued.

During the years 1787 and 1788 there was a constant succession of deaths, and by swift degrees the generation which had formed the glory and the charm of Louis XV.'s Court vanished utterly. And those who went first were favoured by Heaven, for they died without witnessing the horrors of the Revolution.

In January, 1787, the Maréchale de Luxembourg died. She was to the last a delightful old lady, full of wit and good spirits. This was a cruel loss to Mme. de Lauzun, who lived with her, and who now was very forlorn. In the following month she was followed by M. de Vergennes. Then the old Maréchal de Richelieu went, at the age of ninety-four and a half.

Not long after the Maréchal de Soubise died, almost suddenly. The magnificent funeral-train marched all across Paris, at nightfall, and attracted an enormous crowd. The old man's scandalous life for years past was well known to all; the populace were not respectful, everybody was laughing and jesting at the expense of the departed. His own family were not conspicuous for superfluous regrets. The Prince de Condé, his son-in-law, the Duc de

Bourbon, his grandson, and the Duc d'Enghein, his great-grandson, followed the bier with laughter. It was one of the liveliest funerals that had been seen for a long time.

On October 29, 1788, the old Maréchal de Biron died in his house in the Rue de Varenne, age ninety-eight, all but three months. He was wonderfully well preserved, and had known none of the infirmities of old age; he was a splendid old man, who conversed with grace and ease, and in his attentions to women his manners recalled those of a past time. He and his wife had long been separated. When he felt the hand of death upon him he sent word to the Maréchale, that he wished to see her once more before leaving this world. She was so unkind as to refuse. The dying man made the best of it: "She is right," said he, "I bid her an eternal farewell long ago." He was buried, November 3, in the church of Saint Sulpice, his parish church.

The funeral service, performed at night at Nôtre Dame, was remarkably fine. All Paris had collected there; the church was illuminated, and the number of troops in full uniform, the orchestra from the opera house, and the voices of the singers, gave the ceremony an air of festivity which made it quite an event. Nothing else was talked about. The regiment of Guards marched out to the strains of solemn and melancholy music. The officers, in full uniform, were attended by the constabulary. All Paris thronged the Saint-Germain quarter. The funeral eulogy was spoken by the Abbé de Barral, who ended

by saying: "The Monarch has lost a mainstay, the Court a model, France a hero, the poor a benefactor, orphans a father, and his friends their idol."

As had been settled in 1779, the Duc du Châtelet succeeded him as Colonel of the French Guards. This regiment, which was regarded with justice as one of the finest in the army, and renowned for its perfect order and discipline, soon lost their distinctions under the Duc du Châtelet; nay, very soon, for he held the command only ten months, the regigiment being disbanded in 1789.

Though Lauzun could be under no misapprehension, and had known since 1779 that the command was to be given to M. du Châtelet, it was nevertheless a keen grief to him to see these fine troops—almost an heirloom in his family—thus slip from his grasp.

To comfort him he fell heir to his uncle's name. The Duc de Gontaut, who inherited his brother's titles and estates, did not care to change his name (by letters patent) for that of Duc (and peer of France) de Biron; it thus devolved on his son Lauzun. Lauzun therefore gave up the name he had made illustrious, and took that of Duc de Biron.

Fortune showed a sense of fitness in depriving him at this juncture of the name he had borne during his happy early years; thenceforth Lauzun was indeed no more. Lauzun, as we have known him, light-hearted, attractive, and brilliant, always content and always

beloved, made way for Biron, absorbed in politics, haunted by chimeras,[1] gloomy, ailing, and relentlessly persecuted by ill-fortune.

[1] During the years 1787 and 1788 Lauzun was constantly sending in reports to Ministers on the most dissimilar subjects. Foreign politics and military reforms chiefly occupied his mind. In the National Archives, T. 1527, there is a long paper on the feeding of the army, and another entitled "Instructions for Light Troops on Field Service," with others on the Ottoman Empire, the Indies, etc.

CHAPTER XXIII.

1789—1790.

Elections for the States-General—The fourteenth of July—The fourth of August—The 5-6th of October—The Duc d'Orléans leaves for London—Speeches in the Assembly by Mirabeau and Biron—Biron, appointed Governor of Corsica, declines to go there—Biron advises the Duc d'Orléans to return to Paris—Mirabeau and the Court—Return of the Duc d'Orléans—He is made Admiral, and received by the King—His treatment at the Tuileries.

In 1785, after various notorious adventures which had made him famous, Mirabeau was in Paris in a state of absolute destitution. Biron had known him in Corsica during the campaign of 1768; they met again now, and the Duc, grieved at his old comrade's position, tried to assist him. Mirabeau talked of going to Prussia to start a newspaper, and Biron, rather uneasy as to what he might say in it, wrote as follows to M. de Calonne :—

"You know M. de Mirabeau's cleverness, you know his seductive way of speaking and writing, and how interesting he will make himself in Prussia, when he speaks of you. Poverty compels him to start a newspaper, to which his pride is somewhat averse. The freedom which he will allow himself in writing will

have its disadvantages for you, and for your Ministry, in a distant country where you now enjoy particular consideration; he must be kept quiet by having money sent him—not by you, that he may not suppose that he is bribed, but by one of his friends who will insist on his silence. I can easily manage this for you."[1]

This letter was plain enough, and Calonne perfectly understood it; still the method suggested for satisfying Mirabeau's wants was somewhat rough and ready: a subterfuge was found. The death of Frederick the Great was imminent; it would probably bring about great changes in Prussia. Mirabeau was to be sent out on a confidential mission and handsomely paid; thus appearances were saved. M. de Vergennes (at Calonne's request), Biron and Talleyrand lent themselves to this little scheme, and Mirabeau set out for Berlin. As soon as he arrived, he opened a regular correspondence with Biron and Talleyrand; that is to say, he wrote to them letters in cypher intended for the Minister; the two friends interpreted them, modified them a little, and then took them to M. de Calonne, who transmitted them to M. de Vergennes, and he laid them before the King.

This secret mission subsequently gave grounds for a great commotion. In 1787 Mirabeau returned to Paris, and a few months later there was published a *Secret History of the Court of Berlin*. This consisted of all the letters he had written during his absence. Prince Henry happened to be in Paris at the moment,

[1] *Révolutionnaires*, by Charles Nauroy. MS., Bib. Nat.

and as he was very roughly dealt with in this correspondence, the scandal was great. Talleyrand hurried to his friend and reproached him smartly. The author declared his innocence, and said that the manuscript had been stolen by his mistress, the wife of Lejay the publisher, who had given it to her husband. This was the truth. But Talleyrand would not forgive what he persisted in believing was treachery.

Mirabeau had always been on very friendly terms with Biron; he felt sincere sympathy with him, and no less esteem than affection. As soon as he returned to Paris, they renewed their former intimacy. Biron was much attached to Mirabeau, and put him into communication with M. de Montmorin, in the hope that the Minister might find some employment for him. He wrote to M. de Montmorin, September 12, 1787:—

"M. de Mirabeau, with prodigious talent, has much method, and amazing energy in any business placed in his charge. I believe him to be very faithful to his pledges; but he is touchy and easily offended at the idea that his good faith and intentions are doubted; he exaggerates the notion, gets hot-headed, breaks every tie, and becomes an enemy; not doing this, however, without due warning, for he has a great idea of the etiquette of a quarrel and of honourable warfare. A word, to be sure, is enough to soothe him, and, more than any one I know, he is ready to give himself up entirely, and put himself unreservedly at the service of his employer, if he holds him in high esteem and can trust him

mplicitly. It is hardly necessary, I think, to add that a Minister rarely has men of his stamp in his employment."

Political events constantly threw Biron and Mirabeau together, and they met frequently. These two, with the Prince d'Aremberg and the Comte de La Marck, formed a most intimate little coterie. Subsequently they and their friend Panchaud organized a group of politicians who met in the Rue du Grand-Chantier, at the house of Adrien Duport, Counsellor in the Parlement. This assembly was known as the Constitutional Club (*Club constitutionnel*). Biron was one of the most assiduous members, and he introduced M. d'Orléans, Fitz-James, Clermont, Noiseau, Laclos, Ducrest, Semonville, Lusignan, Saisseval and Dampierre.

Mirabeau, guided by his keen political instinct, foresaw the Revolution, and told all who would listen that the meeting of the States-General was inevitable. "It is impossible to doubt it," he wrote. "The Government is in the predicament I foretold so often. 'If you will not have them on foot they will come on horseback.'" In order to be a member of that assembly Mirabeau bought, in 1788, a property worth 4800 francs, promising to pay by November 20th. On the 14th he had not a sou of the money. He wrote to Biron: "You will do me an immense service by inducing M. de Montmorin to supply me with the sum of 4800 francs; the case is most urgent; to me, the only chance is at stake, that I can have at present of sitting in the States-General.

I beg you to pledge me to M. de Montmorin to anything to which you would pledge yourself in my place, and to nothing more. I can promise to spare an individual, I cannot bind myself to respect or consider any principles but my own. But this much is perfectly true, and may be believed: that, in the National Assembly I shall be a zealous Monarchist, because I know full well how needful it is to scotch ministerial despotism and restore the royal authority."

On the 16th he writes again, yet more pressingly: "If to the 4800 francs for the property a hundred or a hundred and fifty louis could be added, Monsieur le Duc, to convey me to the district where my election is to be managed,[1] or to cheer the electors, it would crown the obligation. I say two or three thousand crowns; venture more if you think it possible, Monsieur le Duc; I confess that I should be glad of five hundred louis." [2]

The negotiation having failed, Mirabeau constantly renewed his requests for money, and it was always Biron who was expected to forward them either to M. de Montmorin or to M. de Vergennes; to whom the Duc wrote, November 23, 1788:—

"I hoped to have the honour of seeing you to-day at Versailles, and had taken with me the enclosed letter to you from M. de Mirabeau. The service he requests of you is urgent, and I really think you should do what he asks you. I have had proofs that his conduct is guided by great devotion to you, and the

[1] *Se brassera*, to be brewed.
[2] *Révolutionnaires*, by Charles Nauroy. MS., Bib. Nat.

highest loyalty. He has other resources which it is to his credit that he refuses to use. He will be annoyed if he finds himself in difficulties, and it seems to me that you owe it to him, as a return for his fidelity to you, not to expose him to the temptations of cruelly pressing needs. You would then blame yourself severely for not having spared a loan of two hundred louis to save from distress and wrong a man who has a claim on your interest, and on whom you might then impose scrupulous respect for all whom you might wish to protect from his often formidable pen. Give me your instructions in this matter, Monsieur le Comte, and add to the magnitude of this service the favour of not making him wait for it."

This lack of money, at such a moment, drove Mirabeau to despair. He wrote to Biron, December 23, 1788 : "By what dire fate do we lack the only decisive power at this juncture, the power of money? Ah! Monsieur le Duc, let us sit in the States-General at whatever cost ; we will lead them and do great things, and enjoy such great satisfactions as outweigh the frivolities of a Court."

Pending the elections, Mirabeau was doing his utmost to overthrow Necker, whom he hated ; he spared him neither in his speeches, nor in the pamphlets he published. One day he heard that Talleyrand had accused him of coming to terms with the Genevese banker. Outraged by such a suspicion, he wrote to Biron : "Next to my regret at having caused any to the Bishop of Autun, I have not had a moment of keener pain than when I learnt from

Panchaud that my friends suspected me of a leaning towards Necker. Monsieur le Duc, I have long known that nothing can make up for defection; but even if I knew it not, never would I make peace with the man who killed M. Turgot, and tried to ruin Panchaud; who has provoked many of my friends; has for twenty years plotted for his own success at the cost of every principle; and who has set charlatanism in the place of talent, intolerant and fierce pride in the place of dignity, and insolent, perfidious hypocrisy in the place of virtue." [1]

The elections for the States-General took place during the early months of 1789. Biron was appointed deputy for Le Quercy.[2] With him were elected the Duc d'Orléans, Talleyrand, Mirabeau, the Cardinal de Rohan, the Chevalier de Boufflers, etc. The deputies were to assemble at Versailles on April 27; the royal sitting was fixed for May 5.

Paris was in the greatest excitement. A paper merchant and print seller in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, one Reveillon, was accused of having abused the populace and ill-used his workmen. His manufactory was attacked and gutted. The regiment of Guards was called out, and fired on the mob. Peace was restored, but this bloodshed made the soldiers reflect.

[1] *Révolutionnaires.*—MS. Bib. Nat.

[2] A story is told by Rivarol of himself, and for that reason doubtfully authentic: At the time of the first sittings of the States-General, the Duc de Lauzun called on him to beg him to publish a pamphlet on the extravagance of the Court. Rivarol glanced scornfully at the prospectus and then replied, "Monsieur le Duc, send your footman to Mirabeau, add a few hundred francs to your request, and the thing will be done."

"Are you not citizens as we are?" they were asked. "How can you shed the blood of your brethren to make us all slaves alike of the aristocracy?" And this appeal, largely supported by gold and silver, at last shook the constancy of this select regiment. Under Maréchal Biron it had been a pattern of bravery, fidelity, and military discipline; but the Duc du Châtelet, a man of narrow views, had introduced many innovations which had not been approved. Protests had been raised, and he had repressed them by corporal punishment, which had made ill-blood in the men. The Duc du Châtelet, in the course of a few months, was as much detested as the Maréchal de Biron had been adored.

A touching instance shows the influence the Maréchal had exercised over the troops he commanded. A soldier who was being persuaded to be false to his duty listened in silence, sunk in meditation. He was urged to a decision. "Not yet," said he. "I am consulting the shade of Colonel Biron."

From the time when the States-General met, there was a storm of agitation in every mind, and in the streets; until the month of July, uneasiness and alarm increased daily. At the beginning of July the people broke into riots on hearing that M. Necker was dismissed.

July 12 was a Sunday. On that day Mrs. Elliott[1]

[1] Mrs. Elliott, a pretty young Englishwoman, who had been in the intimacy of the Prince of Wales, lived in Paris for some time in the circle of the Duc d'Orléans, and has left interesting reminiscences. *Journal of My Life during the French Revolution*, by Grace Dalrymple Elliott. Bentley, 1859.

had gone to fish at Le Raincy with the Duc d'Orléans, the Prince d'Aremberg, and a few others. When she returned in the evening the Revolution had begun. All was confusion and tumult, fighting was going on on the Boulevards, the theatres were closed, and traffic stopped.

On hearing this the Prince seemed surprised and shocked; he got into Mrs. Elliott's carriage and was driven to his house at Monceau. There he found several friends in great anxiety, for a rumour had got abroad that he had been taken to the Bastille and beheaded by the King's order. M. d'Orléans closed his doors against everyone but Mme. de Buffon and Biron. He even begged the Prince d'Aremberg to go at once and bring Biron to him; but Biron was not at home, and not to be found that night. He had gone to Versailles in the evening, thinking he should find the Duc d'Orléans there, or at any rate have news of him.

On the following morning M. d'Orléans went to Versailles to attend the King's *lever*. Louis XVI. affected not to see him, but as it was usual for the first Prince of the blood, when he happened to be present, to hand the King his shirt, the gentleman-in-waiting gave it to the Duke to present to the King.

M. d'Orléans went forward, but the King asked him what he wanted. "To await your Majesty's orders."—"I want nothing of you," replied the King. "Return from whence you came."

M. d'Orléans, exasperated by this treatment,

became a violent adversary of the Court circle, and especially of the Queen.

On the following day the Bastille was taken.[1]

Biron distinguished himself during the night of August 4, among the gentlemen who were most enthusiastically ready to abandon the privileges of their order. Then, when the deed was done, he could not help saying to his friends with a laugh: "Messieurs, what have we done? Who really knows?" And Condorcet tells us that all those about him admitted that they did not know.[2]

In conversing with the Comte de La Marck and with Biron, Mirabeau made no secret of his sovereign contempt for most of the men who were the leaders of the Revolution. He held both La Fayette and the Duc d'Orléans very cheap, and it was a great mistake to say that he had sold himself to the Prince's party.

Meanwhile, affairs were becoming more and more serious. Towards the end of September, 1789, Mirabeau was very anxious about the situation, and foresaw with very accurate insight all that was about to happen. He said to La Marck, in speaking of the Court, "What are those people thinking of? Do they not see the gulf yawning at their feet?" On

[1] Biron wrote every week to his constituents a short review of what had taken place in the National Assembly. These letters on the States-General have been published, and are not very interesting; it is unnecessary to quote from them.

[2] Rivarol calls that evening of August 4 "the night of dupes" —"When, just as the point of honour among the Japanese consists in executing themselves in the presence of their friends, so the deputies who were nobles struck at themselves and at the same time at their constituents."

one occasion even, driven to a more violent pitch of exasperation than usual, he exclaimed : "All is lost! The King and Queen will perish in the crash, and, you will see, the populace will batter their dead bodies."—"He noticed," says La Marck, "with what horror I heard him use this expression."—"Yes, yes," he repeated, "they will batter their bodies. You do not understand the danger of their position. But it must be explained to them."

On October 4 the excitement in Paris was extraordinary. On the morning of the 5th the King went out hunting as usual; when he returned in the evening it was in the midst of shots; the mob were firing on the guards in the great avenue at Versailles.

Who is unfamiliar with the story of the dreadful days of October 5 and 6? The Duc d'Orléans was accused of having fomented the revolt; it was said that he had been seen in disguise, moving among the populace, exciting them by words and gestures, and distributing gold in handfuls. It was reported that with him were the Duc de Biron, the Duc d'Aiguillon, and Mirabeau, also disguised, and, like him, inciting the crowd to march to Versailles. Mirabeau, it was asserted, had been seen armed with a sabre, in the midst of the *poissardes*, and then rushing through the ranks of the Flanders regiment.

But these accusations were no more true of Mirabeau than of Biron and d'Orléans. Mirabeau spent the whole day of the 5th at the house of the Comte de La Marck. As to the Duc d'Orléans, far

from being at Versailles, he dined on that day with Mrs. Elliott and some friends.

It was only natural that, being suspected of plotting against the King and Court, the Duc d'Orléans should be regarded as the instigator of the riots. He had a stormy interview with La Fayette and M. de Montmorin in Mme. de Coigny's house, Rue Sainte-Nicaise. La Fayette aimed at getting rid of the Prince at any cost, trying to make him responsible for the crimes of October 6, which the Duke had no means of foreseeing or preventing. He vehemently insisted that the Duke must at once leave France, and to afford a pretext for his departure, M. de Montmorin offered him an official mission to England. The situation was humiliating for the Prince. If he left, it would be tantamount to an admission that he had taken some part in the riots of October. Not knowing how to decide, he desired Biron to consult Mirabeau, who, at the moment, was ill at the Hôpital de Malte, where he always stayed when in Paris.

Mirabeau was most desirous that the Duc d'Orléans should remain in France, because his departure must leave to La Fayette a power and importance which might imperil the monarchy. He was convinced that La Fayette's ideas tended to a republic, and he did not wish that this man, to whom events had just given a dictatorship, should stand without a rival.

This, then, was his reply to Biron after listening to him attentively. His express opinion was that the Prince ought not to yield to La Fayette, who

was giving himself all the airs of a *Maire du Palais*, and he added: "If M. d'Orléans will come to the National Assembly on the day after to-morrow I will attack La Fayette, and speak in such a way as shall unmask all his pretensions. Can M. d'Orléans abandon the post entrusted to him by his constituents without being condemned? If he obeys, I shall denounce him, and oppose it; if he stays, and betrays the invisible hand that is trying to push him away, I shall denounce an authority that supersedes the law. He has his choice of those two courses."

Biron entirely approved of his friend's views. In reply he set forth at full length the most chivalrous feelings, and declared that M. d'Orléans would be present at the Assembly on the next day but one, and they parted, agreeing that they would meet on that day.

Mirabeau went early to the Assembly on the day named, but had hardly arrived when he received a despairing letter from Biron—"a note wearing the crape of his grief." It announced the Duc d'Orléans' departure for England. "The wretch!" exclaimed Mirabeau, in towering indignation. "They say that I am his partisan, but I would not have him to be my servant."

La Fayette was not satisfied by the removal of the Duc d'Orléans; he was anxious also to get rid of Biron. But this time he ran against a will as firm as rock. "If I am guilty I will stand my trial," said Biron simply. On hearing of this noble conduct Mirabeau wrote to La Marck: "M. de Biron has

just left me. He will not go away. He has refused because he is a man of honour."

But this was not the last that was heard of the events of October 6; Necker and La Fayette publicly charged the Duc d'Orléans, Biron and Mirabeau with complicity. A prolonged legal inquiry into the matter was instituted; the conclusions were unfavourable to the accused, though not the smallest real evidence could be brought against them.

Mirabeau spoke in his own defence from the tribune of the Assembly, and proved his innocence in a speech that was hailed with applause. Biron followed him, and with his usual generosity, without troubling himself about the charges of which he was the object, thought only of defending his absent friend, explaining the motives which had caused him to leave France.

"I wish," he said, "to confirm the facts as stated by M. de Mirabeau, in which I was implicated. I knew nothing of the proposal submitted by M. de La Fayette to M. le Duc d'Orléans till the moment when it was made, and M. d'Orléans had decided for himself. He gave me his confidence; I know his purity of purpose. I was deeply affected by the news; I feared that so great a sacrifice would be misinterpreted, and that he would be accused of imaginary crimes which would have vanished in his presence. I therefore opposed his departure. M. d'Orléans replied that he wished to give the King proof of the purity of his intentions; that M. de La Fayette had told him that his name was made use of to disturb the

public peace. I still argued, but in vain. M. d'Orléans went." Then, hoping to exculpate his friend, the Duc de Biron added: "I will take leave to go back a little further. M. d'Orléans was the first partisan of liberty in France; his instructions, diffused through the provinces, may perhaps have contributed to the Revolution from which we all hope for benefit. His conduct has found support in his moderation, the proper attribute of the first of his family, perhaps, who ever conceived the great idea of liberty. When his bust was carried in procession he himself hid. When the King gave to the representatives of the nation such a proof of confidence as to come and place his fortunes in the hands of this Assembly—which already held those of the Empire—M. d'Orléans would not come to Paris. He may have been wrong; the kindly feeling of a great nation is such a homage as no good citizen should reject, and M. d'Orléans had a right to receive it."

Finally, in alluding to the legal inquiry, Biron concluded in these words: "Allow me to make one single remark on this amazing inquiry. Do we find on the list of witnesses, members of this Assembly, the name of one defender of liberty? Can we suppose that these would all have been silent if they had known who were guilty? In M. d'Orléans' name I pledge myself to furnish you with details which will prove his innocence of the charge, and silence calumny." 'M. Gontaut' walked from the tribune to his seat amid loud cheers.

The Assembly had moved to Paris with the King;

it was held there from October 16. The Chevalier de Boufflers, of whom we heard so much in the former volume, being a deputy, followed the Assembly to the capital; he did not know where to find a home, and his cousin, the Duchesse de Biron, offered him hospitality. She was then living at 127, Rue de Bourbon (since called Rue de Lille). But the events of October had shaken the monarchy to its foundations. Many persons had taken fright, and more than one thought it only prudent to seek refuge abroad. Among these was Mme de Biron. On October 20 she left her house to her cousin Boufflers, and escaped to London accompanied by Mme. de Cambis.

Some days after Boufflers wrote to Mme. de Sabran: "I have as yet no news of Mme. de Biron since she left. I only know that she astonished Paris by leaving it; but I ascribe it entirely to Mme. de Cambis, who, no doubt, turned her head by frightening her, and was probably delighted to take advantage of the opportunity for going to see the Duke of Richmond on cheap terms."[1]

Mme. de Biron remained in England more than a year. Her conduct, at first so startling, found many imitators. Several members of the Assembly having met with insults, many sent in their resignation and demanded their passports. The situation was not less critical in the provinces; nothing was talked of anywhere but riots and plots.

[1] From the curious *Correspondance de Mme. de Sabran*, edited by M. de Croze.

On the day after that when the King was dragged to the Tuileries, Mirabeau came to see La Marck. "If you have any way," said he, "of getting the King and Queen to listen to you, convince them that France and they are lost if the Royal Family does not get out of Paris." He declared that if the Sovereigns remained in the capital fearful scenes would ensue, that the populace would become the tool of faction; that it was impossible to calculate how far popular fury would rise, in short that a civil war was the only means left for re-establishing the King's legitimate authority. And even such a war was less terrible than the disasters he foresaw.

La Marck pointed out to him that it was impossible that the King should fight without money. "Civil war," replied Mirabeau, "is always carried on without money; besides, in the present circumstances, it could not last long. All Frenchmen crave for place or money; they can be fed with promises; and soon you will see the King's party everywhere triumphant."

La Marck got Mirabeau's opinion repeated at Court; but the King's helplessness and indecision were beyond all words. "To give you an idea of his character," said Monsieur, "imagine oiled billiard-balls which you were vainly trying to keep together." In short, Louis XVI. could not make up his mind.

In December, 1789, Biron,[1] who was in the way in Paris, was appointed Governor of the Island of Corsica. In January, 1790, the Assembly decreed

[1] He was then living in the Rue de Grenelle.

that none of its members could accept employment under Government. On January 26 Biron appeared in the tribune; "It would have been a flattering mission," he said to his colleagues, "to carry your decrees to a population to whom they would give liberty; but at this moment I am only too glad to tell you how highly I applaud the decree laid before you, and to sacrifice everything to remain a member of this body." (Loud applause.) M. Salicetti, member for Corsica, replied that the island was rejoicing at the idea that Biron was to go there. In the name of the Corsicans he begged for the appointment of Biron whom everybody longed for. M. Salicetti returned to the charge at the meeting of April 29.

But Biron had no wish to go to Corsica. He thought he could be of greater use in Paris, and he also wished to remain near Mme. de Coigny, to whom he was more attached than ever, and to keep an eye on the progress of events.[1] He therefore refused the governorship offered to him.

The Marquise de Coigny was fond of frequenting the riding-school, where the National Assembly held its sittings. She never missed one when Biron was to speak. In fact, she was the chief actor in a

[1] Biron took his duties as a deputy very seriously, and distinguished himself by his zeal and activity. In April, 1790, he drew up a report on the demands of the post-masters with reference to the suppression of their privileges, and obtained them some indemnity. It was in consequence of this report that the office of Intendant of Posts was abolished. In May, 1760, when difficulties arose between England and Spain, he proposed that France should arbitrate between these two powers, and also moved a vote of approval of the measures taken by the King.

singular little scene. One day she was present at a meeting with the Comtesse Diane de Polignac. The Abbé Maury was speaking, and expressing opinions quite out of harmony with the ideas of the time. The two ladies, who did not share the Abbé's views, manifested their disapprobation in a variety of ways, by gestures, whispers and smiles; at last the Abbé, out of all patience, exclaimed, as he pointed at them: "Monsieur le président, pray silence those two *sans-culottes!*" The phrase was taken up, and thenceforth served to designate the zealous partisans of the Revolution.

When the Duc d'Orléans left Paris, in October, 1789, he settled in England, with the intention of remaining there for some time; he had sold all his horses, and dismissed most of his servants. A few days later Mme. de Buffon followed him. The Prince, out of heart at the progress of events, and dreading what the future might bring, proposed to her that they should set out together for America, and live there in strict privacy; but she, fearing that the Duke might some day regret it, refused to take so decisive a step. The Prince soon found exile tedious; at Paris, too, his adherents clamoured for his return, and his arrival was constantly being announced, while his enemies persistently spread the rumour that he dared not return. Biron, who kept him regularly informed of the march of events, was provoked at last by the doubts so incessantly thrown on his friend's courage; he wrote to him urgently entreating him to come back, and so to prove that he

was not afraid of La Fayette. The Prince at last yielded, and wrote a long letter to the National Assembly, asking leave to be present on July 14, and to resume his seat in the Assembly. He also spoke of the mission entrusted to him by M. de Montmorin after the riots of October.

Biron seconded his friend's application : "At a time of despotic and arbitrary rule," said he, "a mere suspicion was enough to ruin a good citizen, to drive him from hearth and home, and banish him from his native land ; liberty cannot tolerate such excesses. M. d'Orléans has done much for liberty. For eight months he has lain under an accusation ; for eight months not one of the persons who accuse him has revealed himself ; not one fact has proved the charges. I demand that M. d'Orléans be suffered to come and account for his conduct, and take part in the national festival now in preparation."

The Assembly having pronounced that there was no need for any discussion, the Duc d'Orléans came back to France. He returned on the night of July 13, and was present, as were the King and Queen, at the famous festival of the Federation, and the Mass celebrated by Talleyrand on the Champ de Mars.

That evening he dined at Mrs. Elliott's, with Biron and some other intimate friends. He made no secret of his regret at leaving London. He told them that he wished to show the world, by his presence, that he was not afraid of La Fayette ; but that if he had only consulted his tastes he should have remained in England, where he should have led the life of a country gentleman.

When Mrs. Elliott advised him to break off all connection with compromising friends, he replied sadly enough: "That is easier to say than to do; I am in the torrent, and must rise or fall with it. I am no longer the master of myself or of my name, and you can be no judge of my position, which is I assure you not a pleasant one."

The King, meanwhile, following Mirabeau's advice, and anxious to show his good-will, proposed to give the Prince the rank of Admiral which he coveted. Bertrand de Molleville was sent to give him the information. The Duke immediately went to return thanks to the Minister. He assured him that he highly valued this mark of the King's favour, because it would afford him the means of showing to what degree his loyal feelings had been maligned. "I am most unfortunate," he said; "without having deserved it, I have been loaded with accusations of atrocities of which I am perfectly innocent. It was assumed that I was guilty, simply because I scorned to justify myself of crimes which I hold in abhorrence. You will, ere long, have a favourable opportunity of judging whether my conduct in any way belies my words."

"You should express these sentiments to His Majesty," said Molleville.

"That is exactly what I should wish to do," replied the Prince, "and if I could flatter myself that the King would receive me, I would go and pay my court to him to-morrow."

On the following day, the King had a conversation of more than half-an-hour's duration with

the Duc d'Orléans, and was very much pleased : " I am of your opinion," he said to Bertrand de Molleville. " He has returned to us in all sincerity, and will do everything in his power to repair the mischief done in his name : it is quite possible that he had not so large a share in it as we supposed."

On the following Sunday, M. d'Orléans came to the King's *lever*. Unfortunately no one knew of the previous interview. The Prince had scarcely entered the Tuileries when a courtier of too ardent a spirit loaded him with abuse, and followed him, addressing him in the most insulting terms. In the King's antechamber he was crushed and pushed; his feet were trodden on, and he was driven to the door in such a way that he could not get into the room again. He went down to the Queen's rooms, where breakfast was laid, and as soon as he appeared the cry was raised, " Gentlemen, guard the dishes ! " as though they were convinced that he had his pockets full of poison.

" The insulting mutterings which greeted his presence obliged him to withdraw without seeing the Royal Family. He was hustled as far as the Queen's stairs, and as he went down some one spat on his head, and others on his coat. Rage and chagrin were painted in his face; he left the palace convinced that the King and Queen had instigated these outrages, though they had in fact no suspicion of them, and were indeed very angry on hearing of them."[1]

From this time all connection was at an end between the Court and the Duc d'Orléans.

[1] *Mémoires de Bertrand de Molleville.*

CHAPTER XXIV.

1791.

The so-called revolt of the Lauzun Hussars—Forged bills signed "Biron"—Mme. de Lamothe—The Royal Family plan their flight—The journey to Varennes—Mme. de Coigny's adventure—She leaves for London—Her letters to Lauzun—A letter from Mme. de Fleury.

EARLY in January, 1791, a rumour was promulgated that the Lauzun hussars were in revolt. The Duc de Biron at once addressed the Assembly, expressing his deep regret, and requesting condign punishment for all who were guilty. On inquiry, the information was found to be untrue. Biron wrote to the Assembly, January 26, saying that there was no foundation for the report, that the regiment was in perfect order, and that the Constitution had no better supporters than his brave and faithful comrades-in-arms.

Graver troubles were impending. For many years he had so greatly abused the system of credit and of drawing bills, his signature had been so often recognized by every banker and money-lender in the capital, that unscrupulous adventurers thought of forging and selling false bills in his name. The

swindle was astonishingly successful, so much so, that Biron, who kept his accounts very carelessly, paid the first that were presented. However, he soon detected the robbery of which he was the victim, and was forced to take strong measures to put a stop to it. He caused this notice to be made public at the sitting of the National Assembly, January 27 :—

"Notice.—An enormous number of promises to pay are in circulation, to bearer or to order, professedly written and signed by *le Duc de Biron* or *A Biron.* It is notorious that they are forgeries, as has indeed been admitted by one of the forgers against whom the public prosecutor of the Châtelet has given judgment, and the public are warned against accepting any such bills or drafts that may be offered them."

It was chiefly at the Palais Royal, and particularly at the Café de la Rotonde, that these forged bills were put in circulation; there were prodigious numbers of them, and the courtiers had their pocket-books full of them.[1]

On Biron's reiterated complaints, the Lieutenant of Police ordered a constable named Chenu to follow up the matter and catch the rascals. On January 13 he arrested, in the Café de la Rotonde, one Jean Baptiste Naudin, known as Granis, issuing the bills

[1] In the National Archives, box T, 478, there are seven bills for 10,000 francs dated Paris, March 19, 1790, at fifteen months date. They are signed: *le duc de Biron.* Again, four bills for 10,000 francs, at fifteen months date, Paris, April 24, 1790, signed *le duc de Biron.* The signature is witnessed by Languet and Viard, Rue Saint Sauveur, No. 25.

in question. Naudin took to his heels, and was pursued by the police; as he crossed the Pont Neuf he saw no way of escape but by jumping into the river, which he did; but some obliging boatmen fished him out and handed him over to the authorities.

The position of the Royal Family became daily more precarious. The Queen especially was the object of the most virulent attacks, and her enemies persecuted her without respite. At the beginning of 1791 an attempt was made to revive the scandal of the shameless intrigue of the diamond necklace. Mme. de Lamothe returned to Paris and established herself in a fine house in the Place Vendôme. A plot was laid for bringing Mme. de Lamothe before the bar of the National Assembly to demand a reconsideration of her trial; the point was to make her appear a victim sacrificed to the Queen's desire for revenge. It was Mirabeau who warned the Assembly of what was being plotted in the dark; the contemptible conspiracy had roused his indignation: "I will snatch this unhappy Queen from her torturers," he exclaimed, "or perish in the attempt." The scheme, in fact, failed, and Mme. de Lamothe returned to England.

From the month of October, 1789, all who were devoted to the Royal Family had been urging on them that they must get out of Paris. The further the Revolution progressed the more imminent was the danger. By dint of constant pressure, Mirabeau at last persuaded the King to leave. In his opinion

it might save the monarchy. But where could they go? In what town in France could they take refuge? At first some place in the northern departments was thought of; but M. de Rochambeau commanded in the north, and the King had no confidence in him. He suspected him of having brought home Republican ideas from America. Then M. de Bouillé was thought of, commanding in Lorraine, with his head-quarters at Metz; he was to be relied on. In February, 1791, the Comte de La Marck was sent to sound him, and in case of success to make arrangements with him. M. de Bouillé assured the Comte of his entire devotion to the King.

Mirabeau took courage, and was already preparing in his head the proclamations to be issued by Louis XVI. to the nation as soon as he should be in freedom. But the unhappy King still vacillated, and all was lost.

Not long after, M. de Bouillé received another visitor. Biron arrived at Metz in April; he was on a tour of military inspection in the eastern provinces. M. de Bouillé had long known Biron, who had served under him. "I had a great regard for him," he says; "not only for his amiable qualities, but for his loyalty, frankness, and spirit of chivalry." They had long conversations on the events of the time. If we may believe Bouillé, Biron spoke with great good sense and truth of the state of the country, with interest of the King's position, with contempt of the Assembly and the factions that divided it; he expressed a wish that the King should be restored to authority.

"'But,' objected Bouillé, 'if this is your feeling how can you abet M. d'Orléans in his criminal conduct?' He excused the Duc d'Orléans by declaring that having at first been prompted by a feeling of revenge against the King, and more particularly against the Queen, he had then been led much further than he had believed by unscrupulous scoundrels; that he had wished to stop, that he had desired the King's forgiveness, intending to throw himself at his feet, and the King had refused it; that then, having no further hope of pardon, he had grown desperate, and broken out of all bounds. Biron added that he did not approve of all this, but being the Prince's friend and pledged to his party, he had thought himself in honour bound not to desert him."

Moreover he really believed that this party would be the salvation of the King and of France.

"Next day," M. de Bouillé goes on, "the Duc de Biron came to my house, and placed in my hands a written statement of what he had said the day before. It was an uncompromising confession of the creed of an aristocrat. 'Keep this paper,' said he, 'which I have signed, and use it against me if I and my party fail to do what we promise.' I took it. I have since thrown it into the fire. I saw that he was in earnest but mistaken, and I was sorry for him."

We have allowed M. de Bouillé to tell the story in his own words, but it must be owned that his statements seem somewhat dubious; and it is certainly strange that, having in his hand so curious a con-

fession as this of Biron's, he should have valued it so little as to destroy it.

At length the departure of the Royal Family, so long planned and postponed, was fixed for June 21st. They set out, with the deplorable results that are known to the world.

The journey to Varennes led to consequences for Biron which he was far from expecting. As soon as the news of the King's escape became known in Paris, June 22, 1791, at eight or nine in the morning, the streets filled with people, rushing and pushing; the angry mob muttered insults to all whom they suspected of royalism, threatening to hang them *à la lanterne*. There were shouts of "Treason! To arms!" All the shops were shut.

Mme. de Coigny lived quite close to the Place du Carrousel, in her house in the Rue Sainte-Nicaise. Curiosity prompted her to come out and see what was going on; she was escorted by her friend M. de Fontenilles. Notwithstanding her republican opinions the Marquise was considered *suspecte*; the crowd, recognizing her as an aristocrat, handled her and her companion very roughly, and she was about to be hanged to a lamp chain, when, happily for her, Silly, a notary, captain in the National Guard, saw her, hurried up with some of his men, and rescued her from the furies who had gathered round her; to secure her safety he conducted her to the Tuileries, where she was locked in the King's private room.

By ten in the morning the palace was broken into, and the Queen's rooms were pillaged. A fruit-seller

took possession of Marie Antoinette's bed as a stall for her cherries, saying, "To-day it is the nation's turn to take its ease." The King's room was left untouched, because Mme. de Coigny was imprisoned there.

Biron, meanwhile, was at the Assembly, never dreaming of the danger his Marquise was in. It was not till four o'clock that he heard of her adventure; he then rushed off to the Tuileries and procured the release of the lady, whose meditations since the morning had been of the most melancholy nature.

The disastrous conclusion of the journey to Varennes gave rise to another exodus. All the members of the Coigny family set out forthwith to join the Princes' troops. The Marquis de Coigny wished to do the same, and go to Coblentz, but his wife absolutely refused to accompany him. With her democratic ideas and past experience, what should she do in a town where everybody thought only of reconstituting a Court as like as possible to that they had left? "Life at Coblentz," writes Augeard, "seemed to me just that of Versailles, only more odious. It was a sink of intrigue and cabals, of folly and peculation, of mimicry of the old Court." The reception Mme. de Coigny would have found in such a society may be imagined.

Her recent misadventure had, however, frightened her a little; she feared for her life; and, grieved as she was to leave Biron, she agreed to go with her husband to London. She fancied that her absence would be brief; she merely meant to let the worst of the storm blow over. So Biron was left in Paris,

far from the affectionate and faithful friend who gave a charm to his existence. Painful as the sacrifice was, he dared not advise her to remain; the future seemed to him too alarming. With his native generosity, he had, on the contrary, done everything in his power to get Mme. de Coigny away, and to protect the life which was dearer to him than his own.

The Marquise settled in London. She had not long been there when she received from the Prince de Ligne some verses alluding to her escape in the month of June. He, enchanted to know that she was safe, could jest lightly enough on the peril she had been in.

She was welcomed with enthusiasm by the English aristocracy; she soon had as many admirers as in Paris, and was a queen in London drawing rooms; Lady Jersey, Lady Melbourne, and Lady Spencer were her friends, and she was surrounded by all the most charming and distinguished women in London. The Prince of Wales, who was sincerely her friend, showed her the greatest attention.

Notwithstanding the flattering civilities of which she was the object, Mme. de Coigny was inconsolable for Biron's absence; both, indeed, were equally forlorn, only the hope of meeting again comforted them at all, and they corresponded frequently. Every letter bears witness to the attachment and deep tenderness that united them.[1]

[1] If we shut our eyes to the irregularity of their connection, there is something singularly pathetic in these letters, written in such circumstances.

As soon as she arrived in London, July 27th, the Marquise wrote to the friend whose absence she mourned: "Far or near, you are truly the light and joy of my life. Your pleasantries alone keep up the cheerfulness of my temper and the intelligence of my spirits." Then she asks him to advise her as to what she is to do; she will submit to his instructions, but she will not take the responsibility of deciding: "Give me a positive injunction to stay here or to return to Paris; if I can live there in peace, in spite of rumours of war, I prefer it. London overdoes me with fatigue and worries."

Biron, at any cost to himself, was of opinion that it would be more prudent to remain in London. From that time they corresponded regularly. The Marquise writes, August 1, 1791:—

"Your letter found the way to London as straight as it found the way to my heart. It came to me with the promptitude, not of an answer, but of a repartee. I thank you for it as the greatest pleasure I can know here. If you knew how little interest there is in my life here, you would be able to judge of the delight a memory of you can bring into my day. That is pure happiness to my mind and heart alike, and both have had but little to enjoy for a long time past." [1]

Biron was not just then at Paris; he had gone, on June 23rd, commissioned by the Assembly, with

[1] Mme. de Coigny's letters are all quoted from the curious book brought out by the book-collector, Jacob. Copies of it are very rare. In the Bib. Nat. Reserve.

Bouillé and Alquier to inspect the departments of the Nord, the Pas-de-Calais and Aisne, and receive the oath of fidelity of the troops. Many officers were deserting to the enemy; it was necessary to demand their oath, so as to know what force was to be depended on. Biron and his colleagues wrote from Douai to the President of the Assembly: "The King's departure revived fresh energy in every soul, and his arrest has caused almost universal joy. The people love and bless the Revolution; their confidence in the National Assembly is unlimited; all hopes are concentrated in that alone. The dignity you have shown since the King's flight overwhelms your enemies, and more than ever you are invincibly strong in the power of public opinion.

"Perfect tranquility prevails in the departments we have passed through. The administrative bodies, the municipalities, and the National Guard are indefatigably active."

Biron was still on his tour when another letter reached him from Mme. de Coigny:—

"London, September 1, 1791.

"You must know that the Ministers from the Emperor, from Spain, and so on, visit the Duchesses of Gloucester and Cumberland; that the Duchess of Cumberland is as well born as half the Princesses in Germany[1] whom Princes marry, and that she has in

[1] The Duke of Cumberland, who died in 1790, had married, in 1771, Anne Luttrell, daughter of Lord Carhampton. The Duke of Gloucester, who died in 1805, had married in 1766 the widow of Lord Waldegrave, a natural daughter of Sir Edward Walpole.

England a household and such personal consideration as win her esteem and liking. 'What is all that to me?' you are saying. I can hear you from hence, and I will tell you. It is this to you: you must try to convince the Minister for Foreign Affairs that France, being a freer power, ought not therefore to be too proud, and that it is but seemly that her representative here should be on the same terms with the King's brothers as those of all other nations.

"I am all the more interested in the success of this little negotiation, because it would make you very popular in this country, and annoy the Queen very much in ours. It was she who two years ago told M. de Luzerne, on her own supreme authority, that he *need not visit those two women.* Her German pride would not brook the idea of countenancing a marriage not within the rules of every Chapter.

"Besides, she will never forgive the Duchess of Cumberland, chiefly for having shown a remarkable liking for the Revolution. To such a point, as her sister told me yesterday, that she (the Queen) wrote to the French at Aix-la-Chapelle to show the Duchess no civility, her democratic opinions making her unworthy of any consideration.

"Really, that Marie Antoinette is too insolent and too vindictive for it not to be a pleasure to set her down into her own place by turning her out of the King's, which she has tried to usurp. It is doing

France a service to ask you, as a good patriot, not to refuse me this.[1]

"It is beginning to be difficult for me to get away from London. Everyone is so kind, and I am supposed to be so much the fashion that I hardly know how to tear myself away from the wishes expressed to keep me here.

"Tell me, I beg, how you spend your day; what are the things which occupy if they do not fill it? I should like to imagine your life when I have no place in it.

"It is said here that Paris was never so full of distinguished foreigners nor more reassuringly quiet. God preserve it so! Where are the Princes' hostile intentions? Have you been sent on their track to make them retrace it? Good-bye. Let me know at once what is to become of you, that I may know too what I am doing. I will not be in Paris sooner than you. This is settled in my mind by my heart.

"My *pierrot*[2] has not come, which depresses me greatly, because my success depends much more on my elegance than on my excellence."

Life in London was becoming wearisome to Mme. de Coigny. "I want stir and amusement to take the place of interests and occupations," she writes to Biron. But in vain she sought for "stir"; she found nothing but crushing monotony, and she met with various annoyances. The behaviour of her political

[1] Biron was not on sufficiently good terms with the Minister to undertake the commission himself; he entrusted it to Talleyrand.

[2] A little jacket with faced coat-tails.

friends was ill-judged, and she suffered from it. The Prince of Wales had had the portrait of the Duc d'Orléans removed from her room. "I am provoked with him!" she writes. Then she was a victim to domestic cares and worries; miserable money difficulties marred her life. It was always to Biron, her faithful friend, that she confided her mortifications.

"October 18, 1791.

"What with the news in the gazettes, the advice of friends, the warnings of relations, the cheese-paring of house-keeping, I really do not know what to do or what will become of me. To stay here would be most convenient; but how can I without the means of living? To return to Paris would be prudent, but how dare I with so many reasons for alarm there? On my honour, on my honour, I do not know what to do, and I believe that I, neither more nor less than the King, must stake my head or my crown on the future; chance may perhaps prove a better guide than prudence. Prudence, meanwhile, prompts M. de Coigny to the strictest economy, so that I languish here in the most cruel poverty; obliged to live on borrowed money, and beg of everybody's good nature. Nor do I see any way of repaying their supplies but by pledging my diamonds."

Late in the year 1791, which was closing so disastrously, Biron heard from an old friend to whom he had been tenderly attached—Mme. de Fleury.

This lady, frightened by the progress of the Revolution, had quitted Paris. In 1791, while the Duc was on service with the Prince's army, she went to Italy, and lived for some time at Rome with other *émigrés*, such as the Duc and Duchesse de Fitz-James, the Polignacs, and the Princesse Joseph de Monaco. They were accustomed to spend their evenings in the rooms of Prince Camille de Rohan, the Maltese Ambassador, who collected around him all the most distinguished foreigners in Rome. The conversation was always lively and interesting, and in taste and wit the Duchesse de Fleury shone above others.

It was at the Prince de Rohan's that she became acquainted with Lord Malmesbury; they fell desperately in love and went off together to Naples. From thence she wrote to Biron, who had kept up a correspondence with her, and often complained of her silence :—

"Naples, 1791.

"No, my friend, your Nigretta is not ungrateful nor weak, only very lazy. For two months I have been here, and always on the point of leaving, and have constantly put off writing to you till I should be fixed in some place where I should spend the winter. Finally, I have determined to choose this town, where the climate and mode of life equally suit me, not to mention that the moon is a goddess here more even than elsewhere. The sea seems to lie there expressly to reflect, to worship her; it will hardly stir before her, and it is easy to see that when it moves it is love alone that disturbs it.

" You expect perhaps, friend of mine (and indeed you deserve it), that I am about to tell you in some detail about my life and occupations. Well, you have too good an opinion of me. I feel too torpid still, to-day. I should think it very sweet, nay, essential, to see you stretched in that easy chair near mine; to talk with you quietly; to read or to do nothing, merely to open my window looking on the sea, and listen to the waves which beat almost on the wall of my house; to dream, even to weep; but as for writing to you—that incommodes me. In the first place I must have a light, and I like the darkness better, to listen to the sea; and then for a whole hour I talk to you alone, and you do not even look as if you heard me. Then I am feeling strongly in one way and you in another. I am only thinking of what I feel at this moment, and you are not thinking the same thing, since you are not here.

"This cursed Revolution absorbs you—I hate it. I love your letters—all but the politics." [1]

[1] Mme. de Fleury's letters are quoted from Jacob's volume on Mme. de Coigny.

CHAPTER XXV.

1792.

Biron is sent to join the army in the North—Narbonne is Minister of War—Talleyrand goes to London, and with him Biron—Biron imprisoned for debt—Mme. de Coigny's despair—M. de Courchamp stands surety for him—Biron returns to France and to Valenciennes.

At the close of 1791, Biron was in great grief at the death of Mirabeau; and, deeply disgusted with politics, he urgently begged to be allowed to leave Paris and to have employment with the army. He was ordered to Valenciennes, under the command of M. de Rochambeau, with whom he had already served in America.

On December 9, he learnt that his friend, the Chevalier de Narbonne, had been appointed Minister of War. No man could be livelier or wittier than Narbonne, but his youth, his levity, his amiability even, made him little apt to fulfil the difficult functions entrusted to him. Biron, who, notwithstanding his superior intelligence and military talents, was vegetating in a second-rate garrison town, might have expressed some jealousy at seeing a mere Court

roué attain to so high a post, but he had too lofty a soul for such feelings to affect him.

He wrote to Talleyrand from Valenciennes on December 17, 1791 :—

"I am delighted with Narbonne; he is doing good service by proving that energy, cleverness, and good grace make a very good Minister, worth more than all the old and worn-out slaves of routine, who are so constantly allowed to make a mess of things."

Narbonne was no sooner appointed, than, carried away by the desire to make an effect, he decided on a tour of inspection of all the fortified towns on the frontier. He took with him his mistress, the Baronne de Staël, who was already notorious for political scheming. Biron was delighted at his visit, and wrote to Talleyrand, December 25th :—

"Narbonne is really inconceivably admirable ; he sees everything, and is kind to everybody. His tour will make a great and excellent impression on the army, but he must be of iron to be able to do it, for he gets no sleep, and tires himself greatly. The troops are delighted with him."

Narbonne very amiably inquired of Biron how he would like to be employed. The Duc replied that he would go wherever he could be of use, that he begged him as a friend not to consider his personal convenience or dislikes. "I will even, if you like, serve with M. de La Fayette; it seems as though we might advantageously keep an eye on each other."

But Biron no longer had the sturdy health he used to have ; he was constantly falling ill, suffering from fever, and had to go on just the same. He had but one wish, and that was to be sent to Corsica as soon as the fear of war should have blown over ; there only could he rest and get well.

Thus ended the melancholy year 1791. Early in 1792 Biron had the joy of receiving a delightful letter from Mme. de Coigny. She too was suffering greatly from their separation in the midst of the agitations of her London life. She has neither soul nor thought ; she cannot be herself again :—

"December 31, 1791.

"I cannot let the year end without telling you how much I regret beginning another without you. This bad opening gives me dark presentiments as to its progress ; I fear dangers and I see a long perspective of separation. Ah ! how sad is the prospect of a future for ever receding, and to which habit can so little accustom me.

"I swear to you, and you may believe me if you choose, for it is merely to think aloud that I say it ; but I swear to you in all truth, that never yet has four o'clock sounded in my ears without giving me a pang at my heart. That hour of the day so rarely passed without you ! You pleased me, interested me, amused me so much, even with those others who bored me and provoked me most. Oh ! How could fear so get the upper hand in my soul of many tender and sweet impressions ? How could the idea

of a possible danger make me forego so many certain joys! The more I think of it the less can I forgive myself or explain it to myself.

"The clouds which shroud my fate grow thicker as they draw near, and I live in a horrible fog which saddens me where I am, without letting me see whither I am going."

While Biron was pining at Valenciennes in sickness and melancholy, he kept up a constant correspondence with Talleyrand on the subject of foreign politics, and especially on the policy of Prussia. Our hero's diplomatic schemes having come to nothing, we need say no more about them; they are mentioned only to show his energy and his eager desire to be of use.

Early in January, 1792, Talleyrand wrote to his friend that it had been proposed to send some trustworthy person to London to secure the neutrality of England in the war France would have to carry on against the coalition of Powers, and that he, Biron, had been mentioned. It had, however, been objected that, "If it were not for the war, well and good; but we have too few trustworthy officers; besides, a friend of the Duc d'Orléans would not look well at the present juncture; the royalists would be scared. It is well known that M. de Biron is capable only of noble dealings, but it will not do to make all the new royalists uneasy."

Finally, Talleyrand confesses that the mission had been offered to him, and he had accepted it, and

he proposes to Biron to go with him and pay a visit to Mme. de Coigny.

Biron, not best pleased, replies:—

"January 7, 1792.

"I cannot regret not being appointed; the commission is not in accordance with the opinion I hold of the Minister of Foreign Affairs. And indeed, my health does not allow of my devoting myself to business. I have the jaundice and fever, I am ill, I need to rest, and have make up my mind to it. I cannot conceal from you that I am deeply vexed by the criminal consideration shown by the Ministry for the new royalists, who, as it would seem, are the new counter-revolutionaries, since, for fear of displeasing them, the Ministers are afraid of giving to good citizens who are known to be blameless, the important commissions for which they are thought fit.

"I will serve no more either in France or in Corsica till we can devote ourselves to the Constitution without being regarded with suspicion. I shall therefore send in to the Assembly my resignation and my reasons, and I will serve gladly in some corps of the National Guard till I feel that I can retire altogether with honour." [1]

Talleyrand in consequence wrote to Biron that he himself was beyond doubt going on the mission to England, but that he would take him with him to

[1] All the letters relating to Biron's journey to England, and the campaign of the army of the North, are taken from a curious book by M. Pallain, on Talleyrand's mission to London (*La Mission de Talleyrand à Londres en* 1792 : Plon, 1889).

buy four thousand horses for the War Department. He said he would pass through Valenciennes, arriving on the 18th, to pick him up.

Narbonne, on his part, wrote to Biron on the 10th : " I thought, and with good reason, that a little trip to England would be very good for your jaundice. The Bishop will tell you, better than all the letters in the world, all that we want you to do."

Biron was a great favourite in London, where he was well known in society; he could therefore do the Bishop of Autun the greatest service by introducing him to persons of every shade of opinion, and of every party. This consideration alone would have been enough to account for the desire that he should accompany Talleyrand. And, though so ill, Biron accepted the duty imposed on him. The thought of seeing Mme. de Coigny transported him indeed with joy, and was enough to made him forget his maladies and the fatigues of the expedition.

Talleyrand and Biron reached London on Tuesday evening, January 24; but the secret of their errand had not been kept; every gazette announced their arrival, stating that one had come to arrange a defensive alliance with England, and the other to purchase horses.

The Duc, crazy with joy at rejoining Mme. de Coigny, rushed at once to see her. It may be imagined what such a meeting was in the midst of the tragical and ominous events of the time—events which made it doubtful whether friends once parted would ever meet again. But then, the first raptures

over, he set to work with great activity to negotiate for the purchase of re-mounts for the French King's army. Unluckily, the publicity so clumsily given to Biron's errand had put up the prices, and he soon discovered that it would be impossible to deal on the terms the French Ministry had hoped for.

He was energetically carrying on the affair when a most unexpected blow fell on him. He was arrested for debt at the suit of a horse-dealer named Foyard, and in spite of all protestations led away at once to a "sponging house." In the course of his various visits to London, Biron had lost money at play in the various clubs, and, as was the custom, had borrowed from the head waiter (?), who, like the *croupiers* in the present day, made advances to the club members. But most of the bills for which he was arrested were forgeries.

The English law was explicit and strict: there was no escape excepting by finding surety to a large amount. Throughout England a sentence of imprisonment for debt was carried out, whatever the rank of the person owing it. A common citizen could have had the King arrested if he owed a sum that he could be sued for and had not paid it. Well-known cases had shown that the most illustrious personages were subject to this law, as much as the humblest commoner. During the emigration the Comte d'Artois went to England. No sooner had he arrived in London than the contractors for supplies to Condé's army applied to him for large sums of money. Monsieur repudiated the debt, never having

known anything about it, he said; he was nevertheless prosecuted, and to avoid imprisonment, by the advice of the Ministers he fled to Scotland, to Holyrood Castle, where the English law was not in force. A bill was then passed declaring that no one could be arrested in England for debts contracted abroad. Not till then could the Prince return to London.

There were two debtors' prisons in London, the Fleet and the King's Bench. The King's Bench, where Biron was confined, was extensive and very comfortable. Standing almost in the fields, it was like a small town. It included streets, shops, taverns, a garden, etc. Neither bars nor bolts were to be seen; only the entrance was guarded. Members of the highest aristocracy were to be found there; they lived in the grandest style, in fine rooms, and giving dances and entertainments. Biron was therefore not too unhappy from a material point of view; he was well housed, well fed, and could enjoy all the conveniences of life; but, as may be supposed, his spirits were at the lowest ebb.

He was in fact the victim of an atrocious piece of treachery. A plan had been mooted for enabling Louis XVI. to escape and place himself at the head of the army of the North. Biron's presence at Valenciennes was an obstacle to those who had plotted this scheme. Certain French aristocrats, then living in London, had been informed of Biron's arrival there, and had devised the ingenious means we have seen to detain him in England for an

indefinite time. The bills came from Paris, where, as we know, they were issued by the dozen at the Palais Royal.

In vain did Erskine, one of the greatest and most eloquent of English pleaders, maintain that his client had arrived in an official character. The plea was not admitted. In vain was the fact recalled that some years since the uncle of the accused, the Maréchal de Biron, had magnanimously paid the debts of Admiral Rodney, imprisoned in Paris, so that he might be free to fight against the French.

As soon as Mme. de Coigny heard of her friend's misfortune she wrote to make him offers of assistance, and to put herself at his service, with all her friends and Mr. Pitt. She never for a moment doubts that the blow emanates from Paris. She suspects Narbonne of having devised this plot to keep Biron in England. "And yet I dare wager that his intentions were not so infernal as his behaviour would imply," she writes. "He has found this ingenious and original way of keeping you here, and so proves to me what I already knew, namely, that want of character in high places entails all the evils of a malignant nature." She sees clearly that what is wanted is to be rid of Biron, but the aristocrats must not be allowed that satisfaction; cost what it may, money must be found, and he must be got out of prison. She thinks of fifty different plans. "Could you not send a special messenger to M. d'Orléans?" she says. "It seems to me that the little service he could now render you would not repay all those you did him when he

was in England." Finally, she herself offers with exquisite grace everything she possesses. "I hope," she says, "that if the sum is not too exorbitant you will remember that I have a few diamonds here which can be sold or pledged or deposited as security, when and how you please, if you need them."

Meanwhile, she was taking the most active steps to procure her friend's release. She appealed to everyone she knew, to the Prince of Wales himself, but all in vain. She was furious with Talleyrand, who had letters of credit for large sums and would not use them to get his friend's discharge. "I hope he does not allow his head to guide him," she wrote. "I believe it to be wicked in purpose and conduct both."

She insisted on having news of the Duc every day, and thought of him with tender solicitude, making him hope that she would return to France with him, as soon as he was free.

M. de Gontaut meanwhile, hearing of his son's disastrous mishap, desired his London agent, M. du Tems, to call on Biron in prison and console him: but he made no offer of money.

"My father has sent to offer me all the Sacraments," wrote Biron. "He is wholly led by aristocrats of every degree, whose principal aim I can see is to keep me out of the way, and altogether out of the game." A cousin of Biron's came to London, sent by the family to settle his relation's affairs; but it was said the Duc de Gontaut had written privately to secure the detention of his son in prison, whatever

might be proposed in order to release him. On hearing this, Mme. de Coigny, frantic with indignation, could not help exclaiming: "I hope that old monster is in his second childhood, if he has really been capable of giving in to such horrible perfidy."

At last a generous Frenchman, whom Biron did not even know, M. de Courchamp, and an Englishman, Lord Rawdon, an old friend of his, touched by the Duc's painful situation, deposited the security demanded by the law, seventy-five thousand francs (£3000). Biron was at once discharged from the King's Bench; but, on hearing of his release, his enemies were prepared to produce more bills and more creditors, real or false; he had to fly instantly. Lord Rawdon gave him shelter, and got him secretly away to Dover, after ascertaining that he would find a mail boat ready to carry him across to Boulogne. Biron returned safe and sound to his native land.

This was his last visit to England, and his last meeting with Mme. de Coigny.

From this time the Marquise resumed her correspondence with him. As soon as she heard of his safe landing she wrote:—

"March 6, 1792.

"I am rejoiced that you are in France again, but I am far from easy till I know you are in Paris. I must at once positively hear that you are safe in the Rue Pochet, and then how you have settled yourself there. I hope matters are not looking so badly that you have to remain *incognito*. Your

conduct is so invariably admirable that I do not like anything you do to be concealed ; for you I almost prefer danger to mystery.

"Your cousin Gontaut went back in all haste as he had come, I am told. I heard from him that you had been arrested for no more than eight hundred louis. If this is the fact, I will never forgive you for not having sent for my diamonds. I should have been so happy and so proud to make such use of them ; no, I shall never be comforted when I remember that you refused me the greatest joy which even you could ever give me." Then she is furious at Narbonne's conduct, at M. de Gontaut's, at that of all the aristocrats, and exclaims :—

"Good God! What a diabolical breed are all this aristocratic rabble ; and how easy it is to defy them when it is not pleasanter to fly from them. Oh! I can promise you that on great occasions I come back to all the pride, the insolence even, of my nature. We always are true to our first trade."

Imprisonment, sickness, and a thousand vexations that had befallen him, had not spoilt Biron's good spirits and cheerfulness. In the midst of all these annoyances he still wrote to Mme. de Coigny letters full of wit and charm. She replies :—

"Hertford Street, No. 41.

"Dear Heaven! What a delightful creature is your wit, and how happy you are in the midst of your woes to have that to console you!

"I do not think that, since receiving your two

last letters, I am much to be pitied even for your absence. They are so tender, so full of feeling, that I am tempted to feel grateful to it. Pray continue thus to make yourself present to me, notwithstanding the distance that divides us. I am tired of trusting to the future to fill up that gulf; it recedes as I advance, and I see very clearly that it is my fate to go on a long time yet without reaching the end."

She then tells him that M. de Coigny has just set out for Paris with no hope of returning.[1] Finally, she consults her friend as to what she had better do; remain in England or go back to France. "War and famine, which alternately threaten Paris, frighten me from going there, and especially from settling there. Advise me once more, and as wisely as if it were for the last time."

Biron, meanwhile, as soon as he arrived at Boulogne, had sent a courier to Narbonne to report the results of his mission.

"Boulogne, February 21, 1792.

"The disastrous and fruitless expedition on which you sent me to England, my dear Narbonne,[2] is at last concluded. I do not reproach you for any of the misfortunes it led to, nor the tedious and intolerable results to me; I will only observe that if I were not so well aware of your loyalty and

[1] M. de Coigny did not remain long in Paris. In the month of September he was at Aix-la-Chapelle. He did not return to France till after the Restoration.

[2] Biron uses the familiar and friendly "*tu*" in addressing Narbonne.

friendship, if in fact I had only to judge you as a Minister dangerously allied with my enemies, I might suspect you of the most atrocious treachery, and should have a right to make my suspicions public; I am happy to have only your recklessness to complain of. . . .

"I will say no more of this ugly business, nor of some odious details of which the proofs fell into my hands almost in spite of myself—proofs which I must at any rate preserve, like 'four-thieves-vinegar,' in case of accident.

"It would be most unpleasant to me to go to Paris just now. Many things there would distress and disturb me. I am very ill and have not time to wait to rest myself, for I am worn out. I therefore am going on at once to Valenciennes by slow stages. I cannot go fast, for I suffer dreadfully from the cold. Adieu, my dear Narbonne; you know my affectionate and unalterable attachment to you."

Narbonne replies :—

"March 5.

"I was too cruelly grieved by your sufferings, my friend, to be able to feel anything but gladness to know that you are back again.

"Your letter, when I show it to you, will, I am sure, seem to you very unjust; but here you are and I do not complain.

"Certainly, you must have a legion. You know now that it is one of the finest corps you could command, and you will forgive me, I hope, for insisting

that you must take it. As to headquarters, the Maréchal de Rochambeau will give you the choice between Valenciennes and Douai, and I propose that if you like you should accept neither, but command the troops assembled on the frontier of Piémont.

"I hear that you are ill, that you have the jaundice. Do not let yourself be cast down by an annoyance which has led to everybody's saying what they think of you, and that is all that is good.

"Above all I entreat you to talk to me as a friend, and with all the confidence I have a right to demand of you, when the matter is one which involves your interests.

"I love you and embrace you with all my heart."

Biron explained that he preferred to remain under M. de Rochambeau's orders, and he stayed at Valenciennes.

CHAPTER XXVI.

1792.

Death of the Emperor Leopold—Narbonne is dismissed and M. de Grave appointed—Mme. de Coigny's alarms—Dumouriez Minister for Foreign Affairs—Correspondence with Lauzun—Dumouriez' plan for campaign—Dillon is assassinated—Biron marches on Mons—His return to Valenciennes—Rochambeau retires—Biron refuses the chief command—He is appointed to the Army of the Rhine.

EVENTS were hurrying on. On March 1 the Emperor Leopold died, and war with Austria became imminent.

On March 9 Narbonne quarrelled with Bertrand de Molleville and was obliged to retire; indeed he was rudely, almost brutally, dismissed. On hearing this news Mme. de Coigny wrote to Biron: "Why did M. de Narbonne wait to go till he was turned out by the King? this is indeed asking the ass to kick him." Then she expatiates on her friend's foresight of the future. "Good Heavens! how events have justified your predictions. I am sure that by showing your letter I might destroy the fame of Nostradamus."

Another day, fancying that Biron might be in need of money, she tries to give him the benefit of a

godsend that she has fallen into, and she writes to him delightfully: "I offer you six hundred louis which my mother has given me, and which I will undertake to have sent to you as though it were a debt. Do not let this disturb you either for your own sake or for mine. The money is not necessary to either of us, thus it will be agreeable to both. . . Adieu. Write to accept it. You see I wish to be repaid in paper." She was all the more disinterested in making this offer, because she constantly complains of her husband's stinginess in allowing her no more than two thousand five hundred francs a month (about £100). She was compelled to live by borrowing.

But Biron was no longer a man of amorous correspondence; his military duties absorbed him entirely, and he often left the Marquise's tender epistles unanswered.

His position was not an easy one.

"Our troops are being worked in every possible way," he writes. "The only thing thought of is preparing insurrections. My presence keeps all quiet, because I am constantly on the watch, informed of everything, and a great deal with the men. I never sleep out of Valenciennes. I have given out two or three times that I intended to stay at Lille or at Douai for a few days; I have come back in the evening and have almost always found that some mischief was brewing or begun."

Not a single day was quiet; attempts were made to tamper with the soldiers; the officers are accused of

treason by their men. At Guise, a regiment of cavalry had mutinied in a body, and the corn riots were everywhere fomented to the utmost.

Mme. de Coigny, knowing the danger of the situation, was very much alarmed, and when her letters remained unanswered she lost patience and the darkest fears crossed her mind : —

"April 1, 1792.

"What can it be that keeps you so long from giving me news of you, when you know that I am equally uneasy about your position and your health? Really my brain is dizzy at your silence, and my heart quakes lest I can no longer reproach you for it. But, if you are ill, why not make one of your people write? You know, however far I am away, a word will bring me to you if you want or wish for my care."

Still getting no reply, she wrote again : —

"April 6.

"I am anxious, sad, miserable at your silence, and only hope I have only that to lament. For pity's sake do not lose a moment before reassuring me. I want to hear before I go, and I may not stay here long."

But Biron had not time to write to Mme. de Coigny. Every moment was taken up by the incessant watch he had to keep over his troops, as well as by his military and political correspondence with General Dumouriez, who had been appointed Minister

of Foreign Affairs in the place of Delessart; and at the same time the Chevalier de Grave succeeded Narbonne as Minister of War.

Biron and Dumouriez had long been acquainted; they had both served in the Corsican campaign of 1768. As soon as Dumouriez was appointed, he hastened to write to Biron in the most flattering terms :—

"Paris, March 27, 1792.

"Our opinions and sentiments have long been in agreement; you, my friend, are one of the strongest buttresses of my political and military structure. We, who are strong and honest men, must help each other if we are to save the country and the constitution. I wish I had a Biron to place in every post. Above all I would there were one in my council, and yet more in my place."

Biron and Dumouriez kept up an active correspondence, both on politics in general and on military operations. But the Minister for Foreign Affairs had strange illusions as to the temper of the hostile forces.

On hearing that the Austrians were trying, by gifts of gold, to tempt the French troops to desert, he advised Biron to retaliate by the same method. What a triumph if they could but show some fully equipped Austrian soldiers in Paris ! It would give the nation confidence, since they would see that there might be a hope of melting down that great army by the attractions of freedom and a sufficiency.

Besides, it would make the Austrian officers distrust their men. "As the Austrian Generals are, for the most part, brutal and stupid Germans, they will think that they can stop desertion by increased severity, and that very severity will add to the number of deserters."

Biron obeyed the Minister's instructions; but the Austrian troops were not to be bribed by either the principles or the gold of the Revolutionaries; and it was not found practicable to send "a company" or "a squadron" of Austrian deserters to Paris, as Dumouriez had fondly flattered himself.

Biron had under his command at Valenciennes the Duc de Chartres. The Duc d'Orléans had made it a point that his son should first bear arms under Biron's guidance, and had entrusted the youth to his old friend. M. de Chartres (afterwards Louis-Philippe, King of the French) was in command of the 14th Regiment of Dragoons, and fulfilled his duties with great distinction. Suddenly Biron was informed that M. de Grave was dispersing this regiment in small companies throughout the department of the Aisne. He was indignant at this proceeding, and wrote forthwith to Dumouriez :—

"In Heaven's name oppose such an absurd arrangement. M. de Chartres is the most patriotic Colonel of Dragoons in the whole army, and the most in earnest about his business. His regiment is complete, well mounted, and full of zeal. Is it because M. de Chartres is a Jacobin and the son of M. d'Orléans that he and his regiment are subjected

to such annoyance? If it is done to gratify the Tuileries it is a sure way, and it ought to teach us patriotic officers what we have to expect. Noailles joins me in this protest. I am sure that it is through some criminal intrigue that M. de Chartres and his regiment have been sent away from Valenciennes, and I entreat you most emphatically not to allow the results of such a rascally trick to continue."

The General gained his point, and the Duc de Chartres was left at Valenciennes.

Not long after this the Duc d'Orléans came in person to see Biron, and thank him for the zeal with which he had defended his son. He had with him his two other boys, the Ducs de Montpensier and de Beaujolais. The Prince was so much touched by the General's affection and attachment to his children, and was, besides, so convinced that they could have no more chivalrous example to follow, that, not content with having confided to him M. de Chartres, he also placed with him M. de Montpensier. Biron took him as aide-de-camp.

At this time occurred an incident, unimportant enough, but which had the advantage for Biron of affording him some diversion and enabling him to forget for a few days his uneasiness and anxieties.

One day a phaeton arrived at the camp, drawn by three horses, and driven by a woman of fine appearance, in the most singular attire. She wore a blue cloth habit with a tricolour sash, and a beaver hat coquettishly tilted over one ear. She was asked

what she wanted. She wished to speak with General Biron.

Who was this woman, and whence had she come?

Her name was Suzanne Giroux, and she was born in the Rue Saint-Denis, the child of rich merchants. After marrying a lawyer at Soissons, named Quillet, she had gone to live with Hérault de Séchelles. She was a feather-brained, romantic creature, and the fame of Lauzun's success among women had turned her head. She made up her mind to see him, and set out for Valenciennes; but, thinking the name of Quillet much too vulgar for this gay prank, she called herself Mme. de Morency.

Biron received the adventuress graciously; he could not but be touched by her taking this step. She made an impression on him no doubt, with her spendid fair hair and brilliant eyes; for a few days she seems to have reigned supreme. But Mme. de Morency was very fond of riding, and would scour the country, though the roads were by no means safe. One day she went rather too far, and fell in with a party of Uhlans who carried her off to the Austrian camp. The young woman put a good face on ill-fortune; she was treated with the consideration due to her beauty, and she was soon resigned to her fate.[1]

[1] The Austrian officers had a smart uniform made for her, of sky-blue cloth, with pale canary-coloured facings; neat little riding boots, and a hat with a blue and yellow feather. Ere long she got tired of her life; she ran away and returned to the French camp, but Biron had left. She went to Lille, met with endless adventures, and became Dumouriez' mistress. At a later period she wrote romances.

But to return to Biron. M. de Rochambeau's health gave grounds for anxiety; it was doubtful whether he could rejoin the army, and Dumouriez offered his place to Biron.

"He is an irreparable loss," Biron replies, "for his intentions are pure, and his military talent rare; at any rate try to find as his successor a General whose opinions and patriotism are above suspicion. I confess that I do not feel that my experience is sufficient for so important a post, and I fear it might be too much for me. But I promise you, my good and loyal friend, to serve most willingly under any patriot General you may choose, even if he should be my junior."

Dumouriez urged Biron to accept the command, and he added: "My friendship has no voice in this arrangement. I have consulted only the interest of the country and public opinion.

"Friendship finds things easy when it is so completely at one with the public good. Let us always feel thus, my friend, and permit me to seize the occasion to place in your hands the bâton to which your forefathers did honour. We have always agreed in our political opinions, we have worked together, we have together been rejected by the old *régime*, and together we will establish the new."

Biron replied very nobly:—

"I am much touched, my friend, by your ambition for me, but I cannot share it; that I shall unvaryingly repeat. Dispose of me so long as you think I can be of use, at whatever cost: nothing will repel me,

and anything will suit me. I am making much greater sacrifices than is supposed to my daily duties."

In fact he was so ill, so tired, so exhausted, that he had but one wish ; to go to rest in Corsica.

Dumouriez' plans, so favourable to Biron's prospects, were not carried out, for M. de Rochambeau recovered and was able to return to the army.

By dint of care and effort the army of the North was at last on a war footing, and fit to undertake a campaign. The entrance of Brunswick on French territory was to be the signal for hostilities. As soon as it was reported, M. de Rochambeau was ordered to act on the offensive. But he was not consulted as to the conduct of military operations ; a plan of campaign was forwarded to him from Paris ready made, as it had been elaborated in Cabinet Council.

Three *corps d'armée* were to march on April 28, on Mons, Tournay and Furnes. The most important of the three would start for Mons, from Valenciennes, under Biron's command. The second, under Théobald Dillon, was to leave Lille on the same day and attack Tournay. The third corps was to march on Furnes. On the 29th, La Fayette was to make for Namur.

Unfortunately the plan had not been kept secret ; it was printed in all the public papers.

Rochambeau himself was to play no active part at the beginning of hostilities ; he was ordered to remain at Valenciennes to assemble all the troops left

behind, and to follow with them later, as a reserve. He at once proceeded to carry out the orders he had received; he collected the forces and necessary victuals.

Biron, meanwhile, received the most extraordinary letter from Dumouriez. The Minister for Foreign Affairs assured him that a revolution was imminent in Brabant, and that the Austrians would desert in a body at the sight of the French army. A few bomb-shells would easily reduce Mons, its walls being old and built of mud; from thence Biron could march on Brussels, and as soon as he should enter the Netherlands a deputation would meet him offering him money. From Brussels he could go on to Antwerp, cross the Scheldt, take possession of Ostend and Niewport. In short it was a triumphal march rather than a campaign that Dumouriez sketched for the General; there would nowhere be any resistance. The Belgians and the deserters would in a very short time double the French forces in the field.

Biron, trusting to Dumouriez' statements, was fired with enthusiasm. On April 25 he writes to the Minister:—

"I received your orders the evening before last. All will be ready by the evening of the 27th. We shall carry no tents, nor camp fittings. I shall be at Quiévrain on the 28th, and before Mons on the 29th."

Unluckily all the information supplied by Dumouriez was false. The Austrian army was fully

prepared; the soldiers had no more idea of deserting than the Belgians had of a revolution; and the French generals soon perceived how inadequate were their forces to meet the army opposed to them. The disappointment was crushing.

Théobald Dillon set out from Lille on the night of the 28th-29th, to be before Tournay next morning. On the way he was told that the garrison had come out of the town to meet him. Having ascertained that the hostile force was double his own, he made his cavalry fall back on the artillery and infantry which were in the rear. The cavalry manœuvred very badly, a few Austrian Hussars made their appearance, and the French cavalry, before a shot was fired, took to their heels, carrying away the infantry; the whole column faced round in an utter and unexampled rout. Dillon tried to rally the fugitives; his own soldiers fired on him twice, dragged him out of a barn where he took shelter, brought him back to Lille bathed in blood, and butchered him in the street.

The wretches who murdered him also hanged his aide-de-camp, Chaumont, Berthois, colonel of engineers, the venerable *curé* of the Madeleine, and four Austrian prisoners.

Before leaving Valenciennes on his first expedition, Biron had the consolation of receiving a few affectionate lines from Mme. de Coigny.

"It is a fortnight since I heard from you," she writes, "and it grieves me too much for me to give you, by my idleness, the same occasion for anxiety

and disappointment. I entreat you, give me as many hours of ease as you can. Remember that instead of pining in suspense, I should die of it under present circumstances. I hear from Paris that you are under orders to attack Mons. I hope you may have all the success I can wish you."

Biron marched out on April 28, and occupied the camp at Quiévrain; the Ducs de Chartres and de Montpensier were with him. On the 29th he took possession of the village of Quiévrain, and marched on Mons in three columns. Being warned by his scouts that the Austrians were in great numbers, he advanced very cautiously. At last his vanguard of Hussars met the Uhlans and the Tyrolese light horse. Biron scattered them with his artillery, killing not a few. But on getting nearer he perceived that the heights of Berteaumont, in front of Mons, were held by a considerable force, well entrenched and defended by batteries; the position was in fact almost impregnable. On the other hand his own troops were fatigued by a long march, and faint with heat: it was folly to think of attacking fresh troops. He therefore decided to let them rest, and wait for news from Mons.

This state of affairs was so unlike what Dumouriez had led him to expect that he could hardly believe his eyes. "I find the whole country hostile to us," he writes dejectedly; "not a word have I heard of any patriot, not one has joined us, not a deserter has come over to us." Meanwhile musketry fire was exchanged on both sides, without much harm being done.

On a sudden came despatches from M. de Rochambeau, announcing the disaster at Tournay and the horrible scenes that had ensued. What was to be done? To attack the enemy was certain destruction. Should he at once beat a retreat? The troops were exhausted with fatigue and hunger; oppressed by the sultry weather, the men had thrown away the food they carried, and had now nothing to eat. The horses, too, had no provender. A retreat during the night in such a condition, and under the eye of an alert and very superior enemy, seemed the height of imprudence. Biron determined on giving his men a few hours' rest.

Suddenly, at about ten at night, and no one knew how, a rumour arose that the Austrian cavalry had surprised the camp. The 5th and 6th regiments of Dragoons mounted in all haste and rode off at a gallop by the road to Valenciennes, shouting: "We are betrayed." Biron leapt on his horse and rode after the fugitives. The weather was brilliant, it was a fine moonlight night, but the air was thick with dense clouds of dust thrown up by the galloping horses. There was something weird about this race; nothing was to be seen, no one knew what was happening; the rush bore them on. At last, by superhuman efforts, at the end of a league, Biron made himself heard and then obeyed. He cried shame on his men for their cowardice, and brought back the two regiments to the camp, with hardly any missing.

The handful of fugitives who could not be called

back reached Valenciennes, still at a wild pace; of course they reported that the army had been betrayed, and even said that Biron had deserted.

On May 3, at daybreak, the army began to retire. The Duc de Biron had entrusted the command of his rear-guard to the Vicomte de Rochambeau, the Maréchal's son. This zealous and active officer displayed equal courage and intelligence in this deplorable retreat, and Biron, in his official report, did him handsome justice.

At last they reached Quiévrain without having been attacked. There Biron met the troops which the Maréchal de Rochambeau, on hearing the report of the fugitives, had sent forward in all haste to his assistance.

The Austrian Uhlans were, however, at their heels, and harassing them. They were forced to evacuate Quiévrain. In vain did Biron achieve prodigies of valour, in vain he tried to put heart into his troops and to recapture the place; he found none to follow him but the brave 49th Regiment. With this force he did in fact get possession of it, but he could not hold it, and was obliged to abandon the camp and return to Valenciennes.

Then began the most fearful rout. All fled pell-mell, infantry, cavalry and artillery; the roads were strewn with guns, swords and knapsacks. More than sixty men died of fatigue and fear; some who were suffering from burning thirst drank at filthy pools and lay down to die. Camp-furniture, waggons, and several field-pieces were abandoned. The men

poured into Valenciennes and crowded the town; then the bridges were raised; not a man would go beyond the shelter afforded by the walls.

In the midst of this disaster Biron escaped the greatest dangers. He behaved with real heroism, and escaped Dillon's wretched fate by a miracle. The Maréchal de Rochambeau had moved up with all his cavalry to the heights of Saint-Sauve, to clear the way for the retreat. The town was thus empty of troops under discipline, and there was the greatest risk that what had happened at Lille might recur at Valenciennes. Biron did not for an instant hesitate.

"I thought it my duty," he said, "to use the remainder of my force to hinder worse disasters, and not to evade the justice or the anger of the populace and the soldiery, whose fury was wholly directed against the General officers."

In the midst of this fierce excitement, and at the risk of a thousand deaths from his maddened and rebellious men, Biron went alone, on foot, to the Town Hall to make an effort with the principal authorities to restore order and clear the town out. The hapless commander, in the midst of this catastrophe, had the consolation of receiving every mark of the highest esteem from the residents; even the troops, fascinated and impressed by his cool courage, at last submitted and obeyed his commands. He succeeded in reorganizing the regiments and marching them out of the town.

In his official report Biron speaks of his own share in the business with wonderful modesty, but he forgets none of the officers working under his orders;

he praises the courage and intelligence of MM. de Beauharnais, de Foissac, du Pontavice, de Pressac, and others. Nor does he forget the sons of his friend, the Duc d'Orléans. "MM. de Chartres and de Montpensier," he says, "marched with me as volunteers and have stood fire for the first time and again, in the calmest and most creditable manner." The report ends with this sentence, so sad and so simple, in which we feel the keen emotion which must have racked the luckless general: "I have nothing to blame myself for. I do not think that anyone can attack my conduct. If it gives rise to the smallest suspicion of wrong-doing, I would urgently beg to be tried by court-martial; and at any rate I must decline to serve, unless as a private soldier so long as my country is in danger."

Having witnessed the sad end of two columns of the army, let us now see what had happened to the third. It had set out from Dunkirk on the morning of April 26, and entered Furnes without opposition. But on hearing of the disastrous scenes at Tournay it had retreated and returned to Dunkirk.

As to La Fayette, who was at Givet, ready to march on Namur and Liège, on receiving the news from the north he gave up all idea of moving at all.

The rout at Tournay and at Mons had a fatal effect in deceiving all Europe as to the qualities of the French army. It was supposed that it would at any time go to pieces at the first show of fight, and it was loudly said that postillions' whips would be

enough to conquer the famous soldiers of the Revolution.[1]

Dumouriez, furious at the failure of the scheme he had devised, at once cast the responsibility on those who had merely obeyed his orders. He wrote to Biron that they had marched out like madmen, and returned no better.

"To this I cannot agree," Biron very plainly replies, "for we marched out in the best order and took up a good position. Even the enemy does us that justice. As to the retreat from Quiévrain, I do not think it could have been done with greater honour. You say I cast our misfortunes on you. My conduct would seem to prove the contrary; but I ought not to conceal from you that you have been grossly, scandalously deceived as to the frame of mind of the Brabant people, who are unanimously hostile to us; this we have proof of every day."

A few days after the deplorable failure at Mons, Biron had from Mme. de Coigny a letter overflowing with agitation and affection; this was a real comfort to him in the midst of the misfortunes crowding on him. It showed him that he was not alone in the world, but that the woman whom he had loved

[1] It is a curious fact that national feeling was often as strong at Coblentz as in Paris. It is said that after Biron's check at Mons, old noblemen were seen there shedding tears over the reverses of their revolutionary fellow-countrymen. The idea of their native land was not a dead letter in the heart of the *émigrés*. M. d'Haussonville says that after a meeting of outposts under a flag of truce, some *émigrés* deserted to join Pichegru, unable to resist the attraction of the French camp.

so much was faithful to him in evil as well as in happy days.

"May 7, 1792.

"I am crazed with anxiety. What is this news from Flanders I hear on all sides to-day? That you have been beaten, that M. Dillon has been massacred, and that you had only just time to escape? Good heavens! What scenes of horror are these that await us, and in what cruel torments I shall pass the time while this dreadful war lasts! For pity's sake send me news of you by every post, if only by a servant's writing. I want to hear regularly or I shall die of alarms. I assure you it is quite enough to have to live on them. And what is this mutiny that has broken out in your army? What can occasion this cowardice in souls whose natural cry is 'Liberty or death!' How is it possible now to doubt that the degradation of servitude forms a better bond of union than the enthusiasm of freedom? And how can I help being terrified when I see one I love exposed to the danger of dying by the hand of the very men he is defending?

"Farewell, never have I suffered so cruelly on your account, never loved you so dearly. Everyone here wishes you well, as much as they wish your cause ill. And really, to be just, it defends itself but badly."

After the disaster at Mons, M. de Rochambeau resigned his command in writing to the King. He declared that he could not control an army of which

Dumouriez insisted on moving all the pieces from his council chamber, without regard to his warnings. The Maréchal received permission to retire, and Biron was named as his successor. It had at once been understood that the Duc was in no way responsible for the disastrous events that had happened, but that, on the contrary, he had shown admirable courage and rare qualities during the retreat.

Biron at once wrote to forefend the honour that was about to be done him. With rare nobleness of character he not only refused the appointment offered to him, but sang the praises of the Maréchal, and begged that he might be retained in office for the sake of the army. He wrote to Dumouriez, May 11, "I have never had any special cause to be grateful to the Maréchal, either in America or here. He has never shown any confidence in me but when he could not help himself. I have often been of use to him, and he has never reported of me to my advantage, nor has he ever said an obliging word to me, though working me to the utmost. And it is because I am incapable of any personal considerations that I repeat that he is of all your Generals the one who best understands the defence of a country, and who can most advantageously restore a little order and discipline in an army which he knows."

At the same time he wrote no less explicitly to the Minister of War. This letter was read to the Assembly at the sitting of Thursday, May 10: "My honour requires me to declare to you positively that the army of the North may be considered as lost

if M. le Général de Rochambeau retires; that a very large number of distinguished officers, who are the most useful on service, are fully determined to leave the army, and that thus it will be in such a state that if it is attacked it may be regarded as destroyed. I can get myself killed as a soldier, but less than any other can I undertake the immense responsibility of an *interim* command, at a time when the most disastrous events may take place. I will go through the campaign under Rochambeau's orders. I have it at heart to prove to him once more that the way in which my superiors treat me has no effect whatever on my mode of serving, and that he is mistaken in proclaiming that we have both lost the confidence of the troops."[1]

The Chevalier de Grave was replaced at the War Office by Servan, and Lückner succeeded Rochambeau.

Biron's position became more alarming every day. Not only had he to make head against undisciplined troops, embittered by reverses and wrought upon by

[1] After the affair at Quiévrain M. Bergnot made a great speech in the Assembly. "You shuddered," said he, "at what took place at Lille, and you will shudder much more when I tell you that, at your door, sanguinary instructions are being distributed to the people proposing to murder your generals. I have the proof in my hand. It is a libel, signed Marat, in which is this passage: 'More than six months ago I predicted that our generals, all humble Court servants, would betray the Nation, that they would give up the frontier. My hope is that the army will open its eyes, and feel that its first duty is to massacre its leaders.' Look at Lille and you will see this frightful theory put into practice. We are to blame for not having suppressed it sooner. If we want to know who are the mortal enemies of the country, there they are! The false friends of the people who preach maxims and distribute papers dipped in blood."

the revolutionary spirit; he was also the object of treachery from his enemies, and the most preposterous accusations. This painful state of things is the theme of Mme. de Coigny's letters.

"Your situation is killing me with impatience and anxiety," she writes, May 25. "I fear your enemies as much as I scorn them. This is enough to tell you the alarms they cause me about you. Believe me, and distrust their stratagems even more than those of General Beaulieu and Co." [1]

Biron met everything with a brave face; nothing crushed him, nothing could exhaust his indomitable energy. But he was ill, his health was wrecked; he asked for some other appointment, urging that he must come to Paris to defend himself against the accusations brought against him.

Meanwhile, the news from Paris was daily more alarming. On June 20, the suburbs had risen and invaded the Tuileries, and the King had been compelled to put on the red cap of liberty.

Mme. de Coigny writes to Biron:—

"July 18.

"Well, what have public affairs come to? Are they still tending no less shamefully than certainly to an utter fall? I confess I believe it as surely as I fear it. The cowardly and savage behaviour of the army can lead only to reverses and crimes. If only they spare you in their implacable suspiciousness!

"Dear Heaven! How thankful I should be to see

[1] The Austrian General.

you patriotically and honourably safe out of this labyrinth of danger and perfidy. Ah! I assure you that public affairs trouble me very little in comparison with that private interest, and that '*Salvum fac legem et regem*' is much neglected in my prayers.

"Only grant this, addressed to you—write to me regularly, or rather, let me hear of you, for that is what I mean. Remember, that my soul is so wholly in you that I feel nothing but anguish and apprehension when it is not reassured about you.

"Adieu! love me as much as I think of you, that s to say always and tenderly."

At last, at the beginning of July, Biron was notified of the transfer he had requested. He was appointed Commander-in-chief of the army of the Rhine. Alsace asked to have him, as being the only general officer whose civil and military qualifications could make up for the loss of General Lückner. He set out at once, only passed through Paris, and hastened to Strasbourg, the headquarters of his new command.

CHAPTER XXVII.

1792.

Biron at Strasbourg—August 10—Letters from Mme. de Coigny and Mme. de Buffon.

Biron joined the army of the Rhine on July 18; on the 28th he took the oaths and the command. He had with him as generals in command Victor de Broglie, de La Morlière, de Custine, and others.

Maréchal de Lückner, who was to have taken Rochambeau's place with the army of the North, was sent instead to command the Central army. La Fayette was sent to the North.

The army of the Rhine, of which Biron now assumed the supreme command, was in a most unsatisfactory condition. His first letters to the Minister are heartbroken in tone. All was wrong in every department: there were no generals, no superior officers, no subalterns; no engineers, gunners or sappers. Tents were lacking, cooking pots, cans, muskets, field-pieces, munitions, tools—everything. No one paid any heed to duty, or thought of anything but jollifications in honour of the new *régime*. "And it is not with addresses, petitions, holiday-

making and songs that we can meet veteran troops, well-disciplined, trained in tactics, and commanded by capital officers," writes Biron sternly. The force was a good one, nevertheless, but the men had no confidence in their leaders; and who could wonder who saw what went on?

"I cannot speak too highly of the men," wrote Biron. "They are full of ardour and the most estimable patriotism, ready to undertake anything under leaders whose principles they can trust. They have been so constantly betrayed or deceived by the officers in command, whom they see daily deserting to the enemy, that their distrust is very natural."

As to the National Volunteers, the General expresses his opinion of them very plainly: "They are capital men, but nine-tenths of them when they join are absolutely bare, without weapons, equipments or clothes of any description. They are dressed in such a scanty fashion that it would be cruel, and impossible, to make them serve in the winter season. They are devoid of all training or knowledge of their drill, and when we have found arms for them they have to be taught to use them in a way that will not be a danger to their comrades."

The officers were appointed by election by the men. "This system," writes the General, "is destructive of all respect for superiors, and of all firm hold over the men. The officers rarely meet with proper consideration from their troops, and are scarcely ever obeyed."

After writing at great length about the forces,

Biron praises some of the officers about him—Custine, Kellermann, Sheldon, and Victor de Broglie. Unluckily the staff was very ill-composed. "I never saw one," says the Duc, "less deserving of confidence either in its principles or its talent. With the exception of three or four officers, the rest are mere intriguers, and of no good at all."

While Biron was endeavouring to organize his army serious events were happening in Paris.

On August 10 the revolutionary army marched on the Tuileries, and in a few hours the throne which had stood for ten centuries was in the dust. The King and Royal Family were prisoners in the Temple.

At the first news of this fearful catastrophe Mme. de Coigny, who supposed Biron to be still at Valenciennes, and who feared for his life, wrote to him :—

"August 17, 1792.

"My care for you is the soul of my life, so you need no more thank me for loving you than for living. But have pity on my anxiety, to which this tender feeling leaves me a prey. My spirit was really frozen with horror and my mind stunned with fears at the events I have just heard of. As you may suppose, it is their ulterior consequences chiefly which distress and absorb me so completely.

"But for the public and individual massacres, which are horrible to think of, as they are to see, the direct consequences of the fall of the throne would leave me very calm, and I should not regard the king-

dom as ruined because a king who was suspected of plotting against it was no longer trusted to protect it. But what does distress me, breaks my heart, terrifies me beyond all exaggeration, is the effect this great fall will have on the army. I fear lest its confidence in its old head may lead to immediate treason, and lest you should be the unhappy victim of such cowardly and shocking perfidy.

"Send me, by every mail, one line—'I love you and am well'—my heart asks for nothing more. Heaven be my witness! this is my first and last wish, and I swear to God I will trouble Him with no other petitions.

"Oh, Liberty! what ills hast thou brought us for the good thou hadst promised! Good-bye, dear heart, my soul and mind are wholly yours and in you."

On the other hand, Mme. de Buffon, who had returned to Paris with the Duc d'Orléans, wrote to Biron some details of what was going on. She had been his great friend for many years, and he felt equal esteem and affection for her. It is impossible not to be amazed at the young lady's view of things, and the sportive tone she can assume at such a moment:—

"The 'Knights of the poniard' (so called) have had the grief of seeing or of knowing that their burly Chief is locked up in the Temple, where he now is with his wife, his daughter, and the Prince Royal. If we knew the King's temper we might take his

indifference for courage. He walks in his garden calculating how many square feet it measures this way and that. He eats and drinks well, and plays at ball with his son. The Queen, they say, is less composed.

"The Court conspiracy was vile and clumsy, as usual. It must be owned that we have a protecting star, and that, with plenty of money, plenty of cunning, and plenty of means, they have always hurried on their schemes in such a way that the success they expected has always been ours. They say that four thousand persons more or less have been arrested and compromised in this disastrous business. The guillotine begins to-morrow on the Carrousel, and the first, they say, are to be M. de Poix and M. de La Porte.

"In the midst of all these arrests Paris is calm for those who do not intrigue. Not a lady is to be seen in the streets. I, however, drive about with my coachman whose hat tickles the street lamps.

"I went to the opera last night. The linkmen[1] were at my sole service. I had the vestibule to myself, and Roland, my servant, paced the passage in solitude. The theatre, however, was full.

"You can read in the papers the things I do not mention. Everyone runs after M. de La Fayette. That general's trickery sufficiently shows the favour of the most honest and least ambitious of citizens: our friend Philippe.[2]

[1] *Les aboyeurs*—"the barkers." Men employed by the opera to call coaches and footmen.

[2] The Duc d'Orléans.

"I will cease my chatter. I have kept my promise. With you it is a pleasure. I swore long ago, and for two, friendship and gratitude towards you, and the warmest interest. I wish you happiness, success, health and wealth. C.B.

"I am perfectly well. I hope great things from this crisis for my friend's happiness and health. He is not mentioned, even in praise. That is a good thing. His conduct seems to me perfect, and I hope that some day he may be appreciated. All his ungrateful friends are in painful straits; some indeed have been so base as to try to cling to him. We are very kind, but we are not fools."

Biron had heard by August 13 of the events of the 10th. He wrote to Custine, quartered at Landau:—

"I feel sure I am not mistaken, my dear general, in the belief that we shall both remain immovable at our post, and shall not abandon our country to the invasion of foreign despots."

Custine immediately replied that he shared these sentiments.

The events of August 10 disturbed many consciences, and put the officers on duty with the forces in a very cruel dilemma. Hitherto, however ominous and threatening events had been in Paris, the army had still been the King's army, and the nobles had still been able to serve and yet remain faithful to their sovereign. After August 10 this was no longer the case. The deposition of Louis XVI. was an accomplished fact; the deposition of

the King who, in the eyes of the nobility, symbolized the idea of Country. If they continued to hold their military rank under the new rule, they would be false to their birth, to their past, to the convictions of their lifetime.

What must be said to explain the decision of Biron and those who, like him, continued to serve under the Revolution, is that the fidelity to the King which, for centuries, had been the sole duty of the nobles, and, to them, filled the place of patriotism and honour, had during the last few years been rudely shocked. The idea of patriotism, on the contrary, which until this period had remained in an almost embryonic state, had just rapidly developed and struck deep root; in a few months the feeling had become such a living power that it was stirring the whole land of France. Biron, like many others, had breathed this new and generous air which bore almost every Frenchman to the endangered frontiers; he forgot the King, the monarchy, and past traditions; and believing that his only duty henceforth was to his country, he continued to hold his command.

The events of August 10 had, of course, produced a great commotion in the army of the Rhine. Biron maintained order by the ascendency his rectitude and courage always gave him over the minds of his men. On the 11th, the National Assembly, not altogether free from uneasiness as to what might ensue, had thought it well to send commissioners to the forces to ascertain the temper of the troops.

Carnot, Coustard, and Prieur were sent to the Rhine, and reached Wissembourg, where Biron awaited them, on Wednesday, August 15.

Next day the commissioners read to the army the decree enacting the suspension of the King's functions. All the corps proclaimed their devotion to the Assembly with loud acclamations.

All the officers of the staff were called forward, and each separately was asked this question: "Do you submit simply and wholly to the decrees of the National Assembly, or no?" Biron was the first to come forward and said: "Yes, without reservation." Several officers, among them Victor de Broglie, tried to evade answering; others, like the Duc d'Aiguillon and Caffarelli du Falga, flew into abuse of the Assembly. They were dismissed from their duties.

The commissioners praised Biron in the most unqualified terms for the part he had taken.

"We could not fail to see," they wrote to the Convention, "that General Biron's army is extensively worked by the ferment of dangerous intrigues. General Biron alone preserves it against disruption by the influence of his honesty, courage, and unlimited devotion to the cause he has embraced, and in which he has steadfastly walked without deviating for an instant."

The commissioners, who were afraid that they might be ill received at Strasbourg, sent Biron forward to prepare for their reception. He started a few days before they did. On Sunday, August 20, they reviewed the garrison on the Place des Armes.

The decree against the King was again read and received with great applause. The soldiers threw their hats in the air, shouting: "Hurrah for the nation without a king!"

Next day Biron received a letter from Servan, the War Minister, telling him that La Fayette had emigrated and that Dumouriez held his command.

Biron, whose health was still precarious, and who could never bear to be alone, had with him at Strasbourg a certain Mademoiselle Laurent, who devoted herself to him and served him as housekeeper and nurse: she was useful to him in many ways, and made no claims on his fidelity and affection. While he was doing his utmost to put the army of the Rhine in a fit state to take the field, he received a most unexpected visitor who revived many delightful reminiscences. One day, sitting in his office, he saw an elegant lady come in who threw her arms round his neck before he had time to recognize her. It was Zilia, Nigretta, the charming Duchesse de Fleury, the divinity of Montrouge. For three weeks the flighty lady favoured him with her company; but Mme. de Fleury liked nothing for long, and one fine morning she flew off again.

Some time after she wrote to him from London:—

"December, 1792.

"My dear friend, I am still your Nigretta. . . . Write to me of all your disasters and your successes; both will be of interest to me, poisoned only by the painfulness of your position. I have only time to

say Good-bye, Nigretta's friend! Your sentiments will always be the joy of my life, and I constantly please myself by repeating: 'He is honest, he is true, he is my friend.'

"P.S.—My address: M. Hermann Home, Frederick Place, Old Jewry, London."

In September the weather became frightful. Incessant torrents of rain made residence in camp quite dreadful; it was literally living in mud: "You might think that the cataracts of heaven were opened," writes Custine.

The Prussians, meanwhile, had come into France. Dumouriez hastened up from Valenciennes; Kellermann came out of Metz to check the invasion on the plains of Champagne. As a result of these movements Biron was forced to remain inactive; Kellermann's move had uncovered his left flank, and he was reduced to observing the Austrian army. But the audacity of the *émigrés* serving with the enemy came to Biron's aid. They persuaded the Austrian generals to believe that the volunteer corps assembled on the Rhine were of no account, and that they might without danger divert the greater part of the forces at their disposal to march on Thionville, which had stood out long against a tedious siege. Thus the Palatinate was ill defended.

Considerable stores were lying at Spires. Custine, in command of the van, requested Biron's authority to attack the town, and obtained it. On September 30 the French force appeared before Spires. The

German garrison made a brave defence, but inferiority of numbers compelled it to retire. Two days later Worms surrendered to the French. Custine levied heavy tribute from the inhabitants, and especially the priesthood.

These rapid and profitable successes filled Paris and the Convention with joy. The executive at once proclaimed Custine—whose corps had been but a detachment from Biron's army—independent of control, and the title of Commander-in-chief was forthwith despatched to the fortunate leader. At the same time the Minister of War instructed Biron to place his troops under Custine's orders.

On receipt of this despatch, Biron wrote very handsomely to his former subordinate officer :—

" Strasbourg, November 9, 1792.
" Year I. of the Republic.

" I am sending you, my friend, a copy of a letter I have just received from the Minister. It will show you that all the troops of the army that was under my command are at your orders ; any you may send me shall be promptly obeyed. I assure you solemnly that this arrangement of the Minister's occasions me no personal vexation, and that anything I can do to contribute with you to the success of the Republican armies will never be otherwise than convenient or agreeable to me."

Biron's magnanimous conduct won him honour with the Convention and the universal approbation of the Assembly and of the people.

Custine, following up his success, advanced across the country which he conquered till he reached Mayence, of which he took possession, as well as of Frankfort. We can follow him no further in his brilliant career, which was so soon followed by such disastrous results.

The Convention, considering that Biron, in consequence of the new arrangements, was left in a command quite unworthy of his merit and military capacities, decided on moving him from the Rhine and giving him the command of the forces in the Alps, where serious events were pending. The General received these orders in the month of November, 1792; he took leave sadly of his friends and his troops, and before going to Nice went to Paris to consult with the Minister of War.

During the last months of his stay at Strasbourg, Biron, who for the last fifteen years had had no communication whatever with his wife, was required to intervene to protect her against the decrees of the Convention against the *émigrés*. This he did with the dignified generosity that marked all his actions.

The Duchesse de Biron, from the very beginning of the Revolution, had not cared to remain in France, and we have already seen that she sought refuge and a home abroad, either alone or with friends. After paying several visits to England, in 1791 she had set out for Switzerland; and established herself at Lausanne with her aunt, Mme. de Boufflers.

In 1782 the decrees of the Assembly against the

émigrés terrified her; she saw her property sequestrated, and her lands sold; to attempt to save what was left of her fortune, she bravely resolved to return to France.

She wrote to her first cousin, the Duchesse de Castries:—

"Lausanne, March 28, 1792.

"I will write you only a word, my dear cousin, not knowing whether it will ever reach you. I address it to Offenburg and take my chance, having heard that you left with M. de Guines to go to Mme. de Juigné, about whom you were uneasy. I want to tell you that I share your anxiety, and to beg you to give me news of her. Write to me in such a way as that your answer may be sent on to me in France without any ill-effects for you. The news I received yesterday has brought me to a decision. Women are to suffer the rigour of the law of sequestration. The duration of this anarchy is so impossible to foresee, our fate depending on the first comer, be he what he may, that it is impossible to discern the end or when it may come; so I have made up my mind to go back. Though creditor's rights are allowed for in the decrees, at the time of bankruptcy, they will be no better treated than the creditors of the State, and my mother would be left penniless. Then it is impossible to pay my people in France and satisfy the persons pensioned by Mme. de Luxembourg, who trusted to my word! I am going, in despair; still, I am going, since everything commands it."

Mme. de Biron returned to Paris, but she did not stay long. After trying to arrange her business matters as well as possible, on August 10 she took fright and fled from the capital in a real attack of high fever; through endless dangers and fatigues she reached England, still pursued by visions of the scenes that had drenched Paris with blood, and in a state of delirious excitement. After a few days of quiet and rest she recovered. She spent some time with the Duke of Richmond, and she then settled in the town of Richmond-on-Thames, the favourite residence of French ladies in exile; there she lived on intimate terms with Mme. de Cambis.

Out of danger, and her fever cured, the poor woman understood how rash her conduct had been. Again she was on the list of *émigrés*, and her possessions seized; and to her woe, at the end of two months she made up her mind to quit the safe and peaceful refuge where she had lived undisturbed to go again to France. Biron had been kept informed by friends of his wife's coming and going, and had known of her flight to England. As soon as he heard of her return to Paris he was alarmed for her; he thought she would be treated as an *émigrée*, and at the risk of compromising himself very seriously, he wrote to the President of the Convention the following letter, a letter somewhat rhetorical in style, but full of dignity, in which he did not hesitate to take the part of the woman who bore his name :—

"Strasbourg, November 18, 1792.
"Year I. of the Republic.

"Citizen President, I venture to ask you with the utmost urgency to lay before the National Convention the subjoined appeal:—

"A faithful soldier of the Republic dares entreat the representatives of the people to take into consideration the frightful position of a woman whom *a moment of delirium*, as she can prove by witnesses, has exposed to the risk of being outcast from the bosom of her country. Citizens, that woman is my wife. Living separate and far from her for the last fifteen years, I feel now for the first time, with painful remorse, that, but for the distance set between us by circumstances, this woman, trusting and composed, proud perhaps of her husband's patriotism, and at any rate unfortunate rather than guilty, would never have deserved to be visited with the severity of the law. It is the part of a nation to be generous rather than severe, to forgive a woman's weakness rather than to punish it. Dreadful in its struggles and judgments for the maintenance of liberty, it is indulgent whenever it may be. Citizens, I appeal to your generosity. Destined, as I hope I am, to bear your arms and carry liberty into neighbouring countries, no interest on earth can induce me to forsake the honourable post you have entrusted to me. I therefore have a right to say, without giving myself any choice: 'Citizens, let one of you come forward and be my wife's defender

since I cannot defend her myself.' This right I claim and exercise.

"Citizen and General on service,

"Biron."

The letter was listened to in silence, and the Assembly proceeded to the order of the day.

Unfortunately, in trying to do too well Biron committed a great imprudence. Mme. de Biron's mysterious and sudden departure for England had been known to few; her return was as little noticed, and by attracting the attention of persons in authority to her conduct she was exposed to perils of which the confiscation of her property might be the least. To this effect Mme. de Biron wrote shortly after to M. de Gontaut; while doing justice to the chivalrous feeling which prompted her husband's action, she did not conceal the fact that it might result in serious annoyance:—

"November, 1792.

"I was much touched by the desire shown by M. de Biron to be of service to me. I beg you to express my gratitude to him. His letter showed how much pains he had taken to ensure success; but, not being in Paris, and not knowing the excessive severity of the Assembly, he could not foresee that the word 'indulgence' would produce an effect contrary to that he wished, and would make him fail of his end.

"I have not hitherto been in any way annoyed in Paris, but M. de Biron's letter, printed in the public papers, became known at Lyons, and has excited ill-

feeling on my estate of Neuville, which is in that department. Till then no one had heard of my short absence, and no one had mentioned my certificate of residence. Now I am asked for one, and as I cannot give it in consequence of that two months' absence, I am obliged to invent all sorts of excuses to evade it. I have said that at the end of the summer I travelled through some provincial towns, which makes it difficult to collect certificates from each.

I am constantly in a fright lest they should lose patience and confiscate my land. In this state of affairs, as they know I am in Paris, and have not heard of my journey to England, it is important for me that M. de Biron should not inform them. If, on his way to Lyons to join the army of the South, he should be questioned as to his letter to the Convention, he will be doing me a service by replying that he was mistaken as to my position: that he had thought I was absent; that I have been in Paris for some time and am not open to the charge of emigration. This testimony may mitigate the unfavourable impression produced by his letter; for M. de Biron, in command of the army of the South, must have considerable influence in the adjacent departments."

Mme. de Biron was not molested nor placed on the list of *émigrés*. We shall hear of her again.

Before following her husband to Paris, and thence to join the army, we must speak for the last time of Mme. de Coigny, the woman who for some years had held undivided sway in his heart.

Since the touching letter she wrote to him after the disasters of August 10, we have quoted no more of her delightful letters. Was it that her correspondence with Biron was at an end? We do not think so; but unfortunately they were obliged to take excessive precautions, and their letters have never been found. It is certain that it would have been the height of imprudence for a General of the Republican army to correspond with an *émigrée* and an outlaw; but they had too faithful a regard for each other, an attachment too strong and too constant, for them to make up their minds to hear nothing of each other. They continued, no doubt, to exchange short notes, more and more sad as events grew more gloomy, till the day when Biron, being imprisoned, could no longer keep up the correspondence.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

1793.

The trial of the King—The Army of Nice—Arrest of the Duc d'Orléans—Of the Duc de Montpensier—Biron's distress of mind—His generous conduct—He is sent to join the army at La Rochelle.

BEFORE joining the army at Nice, Biron spent some time in Paris. This stay was indispensable, to enable him to settle his private affairs and to see the Ministers, especially the Minister of War; he wished to take his orders and exact instructions as to what was expected of him.

He reached Paris in the early days of 1793. As he had no residence now in the capital, he put up at the Hotel Saint-Marc, Rue Saint-Marc. There he settled himself, with the inevitable Mlle. Laurent, who now never left him.

Biron's first visit was to the Duc d'Orléans and Mme. de Buffon. After the first effusion of feeling, which was but natural after a long separation in such times, the Prince told his friend of the terrible events immediately in prospect. He was a member of the Convention and inevitably dragged into the most momentous decisions. Blinded by evil counsel, and

unable now to check himself in the path he had entered on, he had rushed headlong forward. It was with grief that Biron found him the prey of the Jacobins.[1]

As soon as Biron was known to be in Paris, the few friends he had left hastened to visit him. Among them was Mrs. Elliott, of whom we have already spoken. Biron knew her well, and she had a great regard for him. They met frequently while he was there.

Some days before Louis XVI.'s fate was sealed Biron went one day to call on this lady, and begged her to tell his fortune. He, like many people at that time, was, as we know, extremely superstitious; Mrs. Elliott had often told his fortune by the cards before now, and he declared that her predictions had been fulfilled. But on that day Mrs. Elliott was not in the mood to exercise her talent; her anxiety concerning political events absorbed her entirely. "Would to God," she exclaimed, "that you and the Duc d'Orléans had believed more firmly the things I told you! The King would have kept his crown, and we should not have come to this pass." Then alluding to the King's trial, she declared that "it was the most abominable, cruel event ever heard of: that the house where the Convention sat ought to be burnt to the ground with the monsters who were in it, and the King and Queen delivered from prison."

[1] He had not, however, lost his sense of honour. At the height of the Revolution Mme. de Genlis asked him why he had left on the shield over his drawing-room chimney-piece, and the others in the house, his coat-of-arms—three fleur de lys—since such decorations were forbidden by decree, and Jacobins were constantly coming to his house. "I left them," replied the Prince, "because it would be cowardly to remove them."

"I am deeply grieved at the King's trial," replied Biron. "There are certainly some members of the Convention who will vote for his death, but they are not in the majority. The best thing that could happen would be that they should vote for his seclusion until affairs are settled. What is to me the greatest comfort is to be sure that the Duc d'Orléans will not vote, as he had told me so."

"I have never made mention of this subject to the Prince," said Mrs. Elliott, "but his abstention does not seem to me enough. He ought to vote for the King's deliverance."

"You must not count on that," replied the Duc, "as he fears that if the King were sent out of France he would engage the Powers to invade France, and that the Duc d'Orléans and all his friends would be lost beyond hope. All you can expect of the Prince is that he should abstain from voting."

Then, as the conversation went on, Biron expressed a wish to meet M. d'Orléans at her house. "When I see him at home or with Mme. de Buffon, he is so much surrounded that it is impossible to talk to him, and yet what serious and important subjects we have to discuss."

"Very well," said the lady, "the Prince is coming to call on me to-day. Return at two o'clock and you will find him here."

At two o'clock Biron was punctual. The Duc d'Orléans presently arrived, and Mrs. Elliott, eager to know his exact intentions, asked him at once what

he thought of the shocking trial that was going on. "I hope," said she, "that you do not go near such vile miscreants."

"I am obliged to go as I am a deputy," replied the Prince.

"How can you sit and see a set of blackguards who would dare insult him by asking him questions!" exclaimed the lady. "I wish I had been at the Convention, for I would have pulled off both my shoes and have thrown them at the head of the President and of Santerre for daring to insult their King and Master." Mrs. Elliott was very warm on the subject, and ended by saying to the Prince: "I hope, Monseigneur, that you will vote for the King's deliverance."

"Certainly," said he ironically, "and for my own death."

The Prince was furious, and Mrs. Elliott not less exasperated. Biron did all he could to pacify them both. "Compose yourself," he said to Mrs. Elliott, "the Duke will not vote. The King has used him very ill all his life; but he is his cousin, and he will feign illness to stay at home on Saturday, the day of the *Appel Nominal* (voting by name) which is to decide on the King's fate."

"Then, Monseigneur," said Mrs. Elliott, "I am sure that you will not go to the Convention on Saturday. Pray don't."

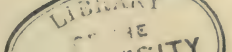
The Prince replied that he had never intended to go, and gave her his sacred word of honour that he would not attend that day; he added that, though

in his opinion the King had been guilty in forfeiting his word to the nation, yet nothing should induce him, being his relation, to vote against Louis XVI.

On this solemn assurance the young English lady grew calmer, and it was possible to talk of less exciting subjects. Then, a few minutes later, the Prince, who seemed gloomy and anxious, rose and withdrew. On Saturday morning Mrs. Elliott received a note from Biron asking her to spend the evening at his house to have earlier and more certain news. She would meet his aide-de-camp, Rutaut,[1] Mlle. Laurent, and General Dumouriez. He assured her of his firm hope that "things would be softened."

Mrs. Elliott went accordingly to the Hotel Saint-Marc, and there awaited news with Biron and his friends. A list of the votes was brought them every half-hour. It was soon impossible to mistake their purport; the votes demanding the King's death steadily increased in number. But when, at eight o'clock, they learnt that the Duc d'Orléans had taken his place at the meeting in spite of his promises, Mrs. Elliott and Biron were agitated beyond measure. Their excitement became consternation when, at ten o'clock, the news came both of the Prince's vote and of the King's sentence to death. Biron was in the depths of despair; Rutaut, who had not emigrated out of affection for his

[1] Rutaut, Biron's aide-de-camp, had been attached to him since July 22, 1792. Custine says he had given proof of the most brilliant courage, the coolest intrepidity, the greatest nobleness, and a rare intelligence.



General, tore off his uniform in his rage; all were horror-stricken.

Mrs. Elliott only once again saw the Duc d'Orléans. Not long after the events just recorded, she had taken refuge at Meudon, ill, distressed, anxious to get away at any cost. She begged an interview with the Prince, hoping that he might be able to procure her a passport for England. When she went to the Palais Royal she was received by Romain, the Duc's old valet, who had entered his service on the day of the Prince's birth at Saint Cloud, and had never left him. On seeing the visitor the poor old man burst into tears. Presently the Duc came in all in black. Mrs. Elliott, greatly agitated, was nearly fainting. The Prince asked her what her trouble was.

"Your black coat," said she, "makes me remember terrible events. You, I suppose, like me, are in mourning for the King?"

He forced a smile and said: "Oh! no. I am in mourning for my father-in-law, the Duc de Penthièvre."

"I suppose," said Mrs. Elliott, "that the King's death hastened his, or perhaps your having voted for it?—but you, Monseigneur, like the poor King, will perish on the scaffold."

"Good God! What a situation you are in! The King has been tried, and he is no more; I could not prevent his death."

"But," said she, "you had promised that you would not vote."

On this he rose. "This," he answered, "is a distressing subject; you cannot, you must not, judge for me. I know my own situation. I could not avoid doing what I have done. I am perhaps more to be pitied than you can form an idea of. I am more a slave of faction than anybody in France. But let us drop the subject. Things are at their worst."

He then promised to do his utmost to procure her a passport for England, but without concealing the difficulties of the task.

"Ah! England!" he once sadly exclaimed. "I wish that I had never left it. But now all is over. I shall never see it again." And they took leave, as it proved, for ever.[1]

Since coming to Paris, Biron had had several interviews with Pache, the Minister of War. On the occasion of their first interview Biron had reproached him in strong terms for disorganizing the army of the Rhine; but Pache had thrown all the blame on his subordinates, and the Minister's patriotism had greatly struck the General; they ended on a mutual good understanding. Biron was admitted to the Council, and he then discovered that he was in fact not appointed to any particular post. Would he join the army at Nice or that on the western coast? Or would he return to the Rhine? He might take his choice. He replied, as usual, that he did not wish to consult his own convenience or repugnance; he only asked to be employed where he

[1] *Journal of my Life during the French Revolution*, by Grace Dalrymple Elliott, p. 114 ff. Bentley, 1859.

could be most useful. He was appointed to Nice, and Pache promised him all he might ask for.

Before leaving Paris, Biron was called upon by the Duc d'Orléans, who urgently begged him to take with him his son, M. de Montpensier. He had already served under Biron's orders in the North; and since then, at Valmy and Jemappes, he had shown brilliant courage. Biron was only too glad to be of service to his friend d'Orléans, but would not the young prince's presence be highly compromising?

To avoid all blame on this score Biron went to see Pache, to whom he submitted the case. The Minister saw no objection to M. de Montpensier's accompanying the General to Nice, and it was agreed that he should follow him thither as soon as possible.

While staying in Paris, Biron had endeavoured to put his private affairs into some sort of order, but they were so tangled, so complicated, that he himself could not see daylight. In the cloud of false and genuine bills in circulation under his signature he could not tell one from another.[1] Before leaving, he placed his interests in the hands of M. de

[1] The following note, which I owe to the obliging politeness of M. de Charavay, confirms this statement, and reminds us of the disaster in London:—

"Paris, January 20, 1793.
"Year II. of the Republic.

"I beg you, Monsieur, to be so good as to authorize MM. le Mahe and le Chevalier to annul, if possible, those of the bills for which I was arrested, and which are proved to be false by the usual process of verification, and not to pay on them the sum of 176,141 francs 14, for which they have drawn on you, unless they are condemned to do so by the tribunals.

"General Biron.

"To M. Perregaux."

Quevauvillers, who thenceforth was his man of business.

A few days after the King was executed, Biron set out for Nice. Though the Minister had urged upon him to go forward as quickly as possible, he joined the army only on February 10. The bad state of the roads had made it impossible to travel any faster.

We will sketch in a few words the condition of the army of Italy, and the enemies it had to contend with.

In 1792 the Executive Council had prepared to attack the Piémontese territory from two sides at once. Montesquiou, in command of the army, was to direct the movements; he was to invade Savoy from his camp of Cessieux, near Grenoble, while his lieutenant, d'Anselme, commanding the division in Le Var, was preparing to march into the district of Nice.

On September 21, Montesquiou crossed the Sardinian frontier, and on the 25th entered Chambéry in triumph. D'Anselme was not less successful. Though the Piémontese troops were far more numerous, and amply provisioned, d'Anselme took advantage of an extraordinary panic which seized the hostile General, crossed the Var with a very inferior force, and, September 29, marched into Nice without a struggle. He there found a large quantity of stores. D'Anselme's men were of very inferior quality, and he thought he could push his advantages no further. He was thereupon accused of dilatori-

ness, incapacity, and malversation, and suspended from his functions.

On December 15, the division of the Var was promoted to be the Army of Italy, and General Brunet placed in command pending General Biron's arrival. In the interval the King of Sardinia had concluded an alliance with the Emperor of Austria, and the French army would now have to fight the Austro-Sardinian forces, who were constantly being reinforced.

At this juncture an incident took place of no importance beyond the interest of the names which figure in it. At the end of 1792 two young men who were at Hyères, and dining in an inn, made the acquaintance of an army surgeon, Des Genettes, on his way to join his corps: these were Joseph and Napoleon Buonaparte.

"Is it true, Monsieur," asked Napoleon, "that d'Anselme is to be succeeded by Biron?"

"I know it for certain," said Des Genettes.

"Well, then," said Napoleon to his brother, "he is the Duc de Lauzun, who served in Corsica in 1769. We shall have a general of the right sort."

Throughout the end of December and the month of January General Brunet did his utmost to organize his army and get it into a state to take the field; but it was in the greatest disorder and lacked every necessary. Biron, as we have seen, reached headquarters at Nice on February 10, 1793. He was fatigued by the journey, but obliged to set to work without loss of time and keep his pledge to the

Ministers. His indignation was boundless when, the very first day, he found that nothing of what had been promised had been done. He wrote next day to Pache :—

"It is due to my frankness, Citizen Minister, to have without delay an explanation with you which ought to be equally satisfactory to your honour and my own.

"After our interviews at Paris I counted on your most active efforts to restore the army to a state of efficiency ; its wretched condition in every particular it is impossible to exaggerate, and yet it will probably have to be the first to fire a shot. We had agreed together on a scheme of organization as the first thing needful and indispensable to restore order ; only your signature was needed to carry it into effect, and after a whole month this plan of organization has not yet reached the army.

"You have no doubt made some mistake ; for it is not in your patriotism, nor in your wisdom, to let an army lapse, by your delays, into a state of incapacity to serve the Republic, or to compel me to cast on you a responsibility which it would be unjust to throw upon me, by refusing—or sending too late—what is indispensable to enable me to defend France against the incursion of her enemies.

"I must tell you plainly that at this moment you are compromising, in the most perilous manner, the territory of Nice and the departments of Le Var, and Bouches-du-Rhone, by the very least delay. In the name of your love of liberty, look at what is going on

around you, and do not do your country irreparable injury by misplaced confidence.

"This letter, which I truly hope will not offend you, and which, in spite of its severity, is a great proof of my esteem, is not official, and will be known to no one but yourself. Believe me, Citizen Minister, I should be happier than I can express to owe you gratitude for your service to the Republic, and to assure you of my unalterable attachment."

The following day, the 12th, Biron, whose reputation as a "lady-killer" had heralded his approach, received a love-letter from a lady of Sospello. But the letter was more than a declaration: the lady, at the risk of her life, informed the dashing General that the town was in the occupation of the Austro-Piémontese, who were to attack Nice, and she promised to keep him informed of all the enemy's movements. Biron did not hesitate an instant. He decided to act on the offensive; he sent General Brunet to attack Sospello. The enemy, taken by surprise, were repulsed with great loss, and the county of Nice was entirely evacuated. In these expeditions, planned very skilfully by Biron, and well carried out by Generals Brunet and Dagobert, the men had displayed the greatest courage.

But before attempting further operations it was necessary to complete the organization of the troops, and give some indispensable care to the various details of the service. The army lacked baggage-waggons and beasts of draught or burthen. Stores there were none either of clothes or of munitions;

what little could be found was of inferior quality. The state of the roads in the department of the Var was such that transport was slow and difficult.

Biron devoted himself entirely to the reorganization of the forces; he was helped in this task by the commissioners from the Convention, Grégoire and Yagot. They were instructed to watch him very narrowly, and conscientiously fulfilled this duty; but at the same time they seconded his efforts, and were of the greatest use. He was also ably assisted by the Duc de Montpensier, who, as had been agreed, had joined him without delay, with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, Adjutant-general.

Biron welcomed the young man most warmly, and treated him as though he had been his own son. Not a day passed that he did not show him some token of cordial attachment; the Prince was a charming youth, full of liveliness and spirits, and he lived on a footing of affectionate familiarity with his General.

Early in May, the Duc made a short excursion to Toulon and Marseilles to soothe the excitement prevailing there. An unfortunate expedition had been attempted into Sardinia; the Marseillais troops had fled, and their behaviour, published in the General's reports, had roused a terrible animosity against them.

Biron had established himself at Nice in handsome style; he took three floors of a house belonging to M. Paul de Saint-Pierre; he occupied the second floor, the offices and his despatch service filled the

other two. And of course he had not come alone; Mlle. Laurent was with him and did the honours of the house.

Des Genettes, whom we have mentioned, was invited to dine with Biron, and he has left this sketch of him:—

"He was really a man of the *ancien régime*, whatever he might do to appear as if he belonged to the new order of things.

"The Commander-in-chief, between forty and forty-five years of age, had a most handsome and noble presence, and, like his uncle, the late Maréchal de Biron, a most worthily deserved reputation for bravery, loyalty and kindness. His politeness was delicate and easy, and at his receptions he was attentive to everybody. The lavishness of M. de Biron was a result, no doubt, of the habits of his life, and perhaps of the dissipations of his youth." The general entertained a great deal, and was very popular at Nice.

Although he lived in rather a grand style Biron was not in a very brilliant pecuniary position. Of this we have ample evidence in his correspondence with his man of business. M. de Quevauvillers wrote, February 23, 1793:—

"M. Thomassin will agree to furnish the two Lieutenant-General's uniforms you desire to have, on condition of your paying for them as soon as you receive the account for outlay and making, as you wrote to me. The two uniforms will be ready early in March. Find means of getting a place for your

porter, who goes about saying that you give employment to M. de Castries' people rather than to your own.

"With regard to your affair in London, delay is granted till the 15th of next month.

"Your wine from Malta has not yet arrived.

"I never doubted your having a good reception, Monseigneur, but a change of climate gave me fears for your health: as you say nothing about it I conclude it is good, and I most sincerely wish you may long preserve it to enjoy the glory you are daily gaining."[1]

The next day comes another letter from Quevauvillers, begging the General to give a certificate of residence to Mme. de Béthune's son-in-law, M. de Castellane, who wishes to serve under him. Then he gives the following details with regard to the little house at Montrouge, so dear to Biron, who must have felt their purport keenly: "I will do all that lies in my power to save your house at Montrouge; I will try before I go to pay all the arrears of rent, and will arrange for the settlement of it as it falls due during my absence."

During his residence at Nice, Biron heard several times from the famous Duchesse de Fleury, with whom he had been so much in love. He had not seen her since her flying visit to Strasbourg. Mme. de Fleury had emigrated, and consequently found herself outlawed by the decrees against all *émigrés*. In spite of this, her frivolous and capricious nature

[1] National Archives, T 478.

would never allow her to keep quiet, and in January 1793 she was so rash as to return to France. However, she did not venture to go to Paris; she took refuge on her estate of Mareuil, near Montmort-en-Brie, which had been her marriage portion. It was a delightful place; the gardens especially were beautiful, if we may believe the Chevalier de l'Isle. Her friendship with Biron was no doubt a strange one. Nigretta had another lover now, and this, his happier rival, having been arrested, it was to Biron that she turned to procure his release. The idea was eccentric, not to say audacious. Nigretta, however, explained to her old friend in a rather involved effusion that he should be neither astonished nor annoyed, that in fact nothing could be more natural. By appealing to the past and its tender associations she tried to tone down her confidences, which probably would not prove agreeable to Biron. It would seem that these reminiscences did not touch him very deeply. Whether her confessions displeased him, or whether he did not care to keep up a correspondence with a woman known to be under the ban of the law, he did not reply. She wrote again, but still he kept silence. At last, when he made up his mind to reply, it was with so much ill-humour that Nigretta was greatly aggrieved. This tone, "without any cause whatever," was not to be borne, and she wrote to Biron :—

"The slightest taint of this kind is unendurable, and I propose as a final test that you should return my portrait and letters, and that the next time we meet we assassinate ourselves.

"You are my dearest friend, and I cannot bear to live on such terms. Let us put an end to this uncertain and cross-grained state of things. Let us kill ourselves and make an end of it, or let us love each other tenderly without objections or constraint."

And at the same time she asks him to certify that she had spent three weeks hidden at Strasbourg. This was obviously to evade the law against the *émigrés*, and show that she had not quitted Republican soil since August 10. Finally, she begged her old friend to lend her the house at Montrouge, and ends a mad rhapsody with these words :—

"Farewell! Remember that I love you before you decide that we must cut our throats."

What answer Biron sent to this crazy charmer we know not; but it is certain that he declined to carry any further a correspondence which might compromise him so seriously.

While Biron was endeavouring to restore the efficiency of the army of Italy, great events were taking place in the North. Dumouriez abandoned his army, accompanied by the Duc de Chartres, and both took refuge out of France.

The news produced a terrible ferment. The National Assembly passed a decree declaring that all the members of the Bourbon family were to be arrested at once, as hostages to the Republic. The Duc d'Orléans was not spared any more than the other members of his family.

The news of the manifesto of which he was the object reached home when he was at dinner, *tête-à-*

tête with Monville, "a man of wit and pleasure," with whom he was intimate. "Good God!" cried the Prince, striking his forehead, "is it possible? After all the proofs of patriotism that I have given, after all the sacrifices I have made, to aim such a decree at me! What ingratitude! What a shame! What do you say to it, Monville?"

"It is appalling, Monseigneur," replied Monville, without disturbing himself, and finishing squeezing the juice of a lemon over a sole. "But what do you expect? They have got all they could get out of your Highness, and they treat you as I treat this lemon that I have squeezed dry." And Monville flung the peel into the fire-place, coolly adding that a sole must be eaten very hot.

In spite of his protests and appeals, the Duc d'Orléans was arrested and conveyed to the Abbaye with his son, the Comte de Beaujolais, a boy of scarcely eleven. But the Convention could not decide where to imprison the Prince and his children; they were constantly afraid of a rescue. At last Marseilles was proposed as a place of detention. Larevellière-Lepeaux protested against this selection, remarking that Biron was in command at Nice and was d'Orléans' intimate friend. Boyer-Fonfrède and Marat then asked that the General should be removed, but Danton undertook his defence and stood surety for his patriotism.

The Duc d'Orléans, the Duc de Beaujolais, the Duchesse de Bourbon, and the Prince de Conti were taken to Marseilles and confined at first in the castle

of Nôtre-Dame de la Garde, and afterward in Fort Saint-Jean.

Biron as yet knew nothing of all this, neither of Dumouriez' treason, nor of the arrest of the Bourbons; when, on April 8, the commissioners, Grégoire and Yagot, brought him a despatch marked urgent, containing the order for the arrest of the Duc de Montpensier.

An hour later the young Prince came in to dine with his General, as he did almost every day; not finding him in the drawing-room, he was going towards his private room when the door was violently thrown open and Biron appeared, his face bearing traces of the most painful emotion. On seeing the Prince he started; then, controlling himself, he said in an undertone: "Come in; I want to speak to you in private."

When they were alone he said: "You see me in despair. I have fearful news to give you."

"Is my poor father murdered?" cried the youth in horror.

"No," said Biron, sadly. "It concerns you alone."

"In that case I breathe again. But tell me, General, what personal misfortune threatens me?"

"I have just received the order to arrest you and send you under safe escort to the prisons of the Abbaye at Paris."

"But does the order apply to me alone?"

"You alone. The rest of your family is not mentioned in it. Here is the order; read it yourself."

The order was signed by the members of the Committee of Public Safety, and the Duc de Montpensier alone was named in it. "Well then, General, I am your prisoner," said the young man almost cheerfully, on finding that he only was implicated.

Biron's eyes were full of tears, and he walked up and down the room in the greatest agitation: "Oh! Do justice to my attachment," he exclaimed. "It is sincere, it is boundless. What can I do? Speak to me frankly, on my knees I beseech you."

The General's position was critical. His intimacy with the Duc d'Orléans and the love he felt for his son were too well known; the least hesitation, the faintest suspicion of backwardness, and he too would be arrested.

The unhappy Biron anxiously wondered who could have dealt this unexpected blow. "Have you perhaps committed some indiscretion?" he asked the Prince, "something which has prejudiced the present authorities against you?"

"No," replied the youth; "they cannot of course fail to know the feelings which animate me and every honest man; but they do me too much honour if they are afraid of me."

"And do you think your life is in danger?"

"It is impossible to believe it to be quite safe when one falls into such hands."

"My position is awful," said Biron. "I would a thousand times rather be shot through the head than carry out such an order."

And the General wrung his hands in despair as he

thought of the duty before him, and the fate that perhaps awaited the son of his best friend.

Suddenly a fear flashed through his mind : "Tell me, have you not in your rooms some compromising papers, letters? Quick; do not lose a minute; let us go to your quarters to destroy them."

Biron and the Prince hurried off, but fate would have it that they should meet the Commandant of Nice, Colonel de la Barre, who already knew of the decree condemning M. de Montpensier; he thought it his duty to accompany them. Happily he was a very good fellow. "Very right," said he, "it is worse than useless to give such people any hold over us. Let us weed out the papers and be quick about it."

The Prince, among other compromising letters, had some from his brother, in which he expressed violent disgust at the turn taken by the cause with which they had become involved. This was more than enough to destroy the young man. All were burnt. Some minutes later the commissioners of the Convention came in; they carefully examined the room, and set seals on the most insignificant papers—even on blank paper.

Biron looked on at this search with "death in his heart." When the officials had left he went up to the Prince, clasped his hands, and then went out sobbing, and in such haste that he left his hat and gloves. The Prince, sending them after him, wrote him a note repeating his assurances of the warmest friendship, and telling him how deeply he felt the

tokens of great attachment he had just received from his General.

Biron was about to give the young man a far greater proof of affection, which again shows the heroic devotedness of this man who has so often been calumniated and misunderstood. Before leaving the Prince's room Biron had placed a sentry at the door. At the risk of terrible consequences to himself, at the risk of his life, he sent a man he could trust to tell the Prince that the sentinel had no orders, that he did not know the prisoner by sight, nor even that he was on guard, and that nothing could be easier than for him to escape. But the Duc de Montpensier, on mature reflection, refused to take advantage of the opportunity offered to him. He feared lest he should sacrifice to his own freedom the safety of all his relations in France, and he bravely awaited the course of events.

He left Nice the same evening in charge of an officer. On reaching Aix he was sent south again to Marseilles, where he was imprisoned first at Nôtre Dame de la Garde, and then in Fort Saint-Jean. Here his father and his brother soon joined him.

Biron still knew nothing of the reasons for the arrest of the Duc de Montpensier, when, on April 12th, he received despatches from his friend, General Valence, informing him that the commissioners of the Convention of the army of the North had been arrested, and leading him to expect Dumouriez' defection. Biron made no move, but when the decree came proscribing the commander-in-chief of

the army of the North he no longer hesitated: he communicated to the commissioners at Nice the letter from General Valence, and at the same time wrote as follows to the Minister for Foreign Affairs :—

"Nice, April 16, 1793.

"Year II. of the Republic.

"Citizen Minister,—The army of Italy has heard of Dumouriez' base treason with the deepest indignation, and without being in the least disheartened. It is fired with eagerness to prove that nothing can diminish its courage, and its devotion to the Republic.[1]

"Biron."

The attacks of the enemy were meanwhile incessant, and gave them not a moment's rest. Biron was on horseback night and day; his health, long failing, caused him much trouble; he was in a constant state of fever. Mental sufferings and anxieties aggravated his condition. In spite of his zeal and patriotism, and his endeavour to make the best use of the materials at his command, he was exposed to constant disappointments of every kind.

He wrote to Xavier Andouin, deputy to the War Minister, on May 8:—

"I know you, Citizen, to be too good a patriot not to take pleasure in assuring you that these annoyances, and the infamous vexations to which the best Republicans are exposed, cannot weaken my zeal for the Republic, nor prevent my consecrating

[1] Charavay Collection.

my last breath to the defence of liberty and equality."

On the following day he wrote proudly to the Minister for Foreign Affairs :—

"Nice, May 9, 1793.

"I learn from the public papers, Citizen Minister, that Generals Kellermann, La Bourdonnais, Servan, and Berruyer are dismissed the service. As it would seem that the Convention must have some strong reasons for no longer employing the commanders-in-chief who have hitherto held this post, and as my bad health needs care and rest, I should be glad to know whether my fear of being no longer able to serve the Republic satisfactorily (to judge from the suspicions so freely cast on the best citizenz), does not authorize me to resign my claims to any command whatever, or whether it will be more respectful to await my dismissal in silence. I desire too ardently to prove my attachment to the Republic, and to liberty, till the last hour of my life, for any sacrifice to be too great."

Biron had dreamed of grand schemes ; he wished to invade Italy, to go to Rome and avenge the murder of Basville, secretary to the French legation, who had been massacred by the mob on January 13 ; but Dumouriez' treason overset all his projects.

Biron's intimacy with the Duc d'Orléans laid him open to suspicion ; the Committee of Public Safety decided on removing him from the command of the army of the South, and sending him to direct opera-

tions against the rebels in Poitou and Brittany. He was appointed Commander-in-chief of the army of the Rochelle coast, with orders to leave Nice forthwith, and join at his new headquarters.

If by sending him to the army of the Coast the Convention aimed at testing his fidelity to the Republic, they could have found no more certain means. Biron's feelings may be imagined when he was snatched from the command of the forces at Nice, and transferred to La Rochelle. At the head of the armies in the North, on the Rhine, or by the Alps, he had to fight a foreign foe, an invader. Here it was not so: he was required to fight against his brethren, his fellow-citizens—nay more, men who were defending the throne and altar, men who were fighting for the ideas, sentiments and principles in which he had been brought up, and to which for forty years he had been staunch. Nor was this all; hitherto Biron had been almost always associated with officers of his own class and equal birth; even after August 10 he had seen old comrades about him. He had been able to indulge in some illusions as to his position. With the army at La Rochelle there could be no more illusions: he would be alone, quite alone.

However, he obeyed, from a sense of military discipline, but fully understanding the lot which awaited him. "I believed I could foresee, without doing any one injustice, that my ruin was intended," he writes; "but being accustomed to set the example of discipline, and submission to the law, I

thought that nothing could excuse me from obeying." Also, he did not exactly know what was expected of him; he had heard little of what was going on in the west. He fancied that he was required chiefly to command an army of observation along the coast, in anticipation of an invasion of the English by sea. So he set out, his soul heavy with the worst fears. They were only too well justified.

He wrote to the Minister, May 14:—

"I am at this moment starting for Montpellier with my horses; the rest of my baggage goes by sea. The roads have become impassable; almost all the post-masters have disappeared, and no post-horses are to be had, or only with the greatest difficulty, on the road to Aix." He adds with melancholy resignation: "I know not exactly what my destination is to be. Whatever may happen I shall never forget that a Republican must obey, without considering whether his services and his zeal may not have deserved rather more confidence, and a post of greater military activity."

CHAPTER XXIX.

1793.

Biron at Bordeaux—He arrives at Niort—The defeat at Fontenay—The state of the army—The rout at Saumur—Rossignol is arrested—Biron resigns his command—His resignation is refused—Victory at Parthenay—Release of Rossignol—Biron is dismissed the service—Called to Paris—Imprisoned in the Abbaye.

Biron, then, set out for his new headquarters; he stayed twenty-four hours at Nismes to rest, and wrote from thence to Bouchotte, Minister of War:—

"Nismes, May 19, 1793; six in the morning.

"I am making all the speed my strength will allow; I must husband it a little lest it should fail me completely when I most need it. I am weak and ailing, but I hope that my zeal may support me, and that my health may not prevent my yet doing good service to the Republic."

He begs the Minister to purchase horses for him, and strong ones; for the slight and elegant Lauzun is no more; Biron was heavy, very heavy. He apologizes for troubling his superior with such a

commission, and sadly adds these words, which plainly show his frightful isolation: "I now know nobody in Paris."

He passed through Toulouse and Agen, and reached Bordeaux, where he spent two days, May 26 and 27. This rather long stay there, just before the outbreak at Paris against the Girondins, was liable to be misinterpreted, and he took care to explain to the Committee of Public Safety what was going on there and the excited state of public feeling. "Treat Bordeaux with consideration," he wrote; "keep some one in authority there who commands confidence, who can soothe the excitement, and give assurance that the peace of the inhabitants is not to be disturbed, and you will keep the town quiet; the people are determined rather than hot-headed; they seemed to me quite resolved not to have anything to do with the concerns of Paris, but even more resolved to cling to liberty, property and wealth. Their confidence in their deputies seems to be great and general. No one wishes for violent action; but if severe steps should be taken against Bordeaux there would be a great explosion: they would ask help from anybody who could give it, and it would not be refused. They do not wish for a king; they wish for a Republic, but a rich and peaceful one. I will keep you informed of all I hear, and I will try to be accurately informed by men who, like myself, desire the Republic one and indivisible. Bordeaux, at present, is not our least danger. With prudence it may be saved; immense resources are to be found

in it. Imprudence might have disastrous and incalculable consequences." [1]

Biron reached Niort in the evening of May 28; he found the town in a state of excessive disturbance and ferment. The Niort division of the army had suffered a severe defeat at Fontenay, and the regiments had come in utterly disbanded; at the moment they were crowded in the city, and no one could make himself obeyed or restore order. Biron had no sooner stepped out of his chaise than he made the drums beat a call to arms; but at the end of eight hours he had got together no more than fifteen hundred men. As soon as possible he wrote to the Minister to report the state of affairs:—

"Niort, May 31, 1793.

"I arrived here very late on Tuesday, 28. The inconceivable disorder in which I found this mass of men—which it is still impossible to call an army—has not allowed of my giving you details any sooner. This chaos can only be set in order by unrelaxing activity, and unlimited patience. No one knows what the numbers were before the incomprehensible defeat at Fontenay; no one knows what the loss was; it is only certain that it was very considerable. No one knows any better what really remains. There is no disaster too great to be expected from such excessive disorder, and we may

[1] National Archives, A F, II., 44. Bordeaux talked of declaring itself an independent city on the footing of the Hanseatic towns, and to appeal for aid to the English, who would willingly have afforded it.

be thankful, I assure you, that we got off so cheaply.

"From what I can hear of the rebels, of their means and methods of warfare, they owe their strength and their existence solely to the appalling mismanagement which has characterized our disconnected and ineffectual efforts to suppress them. Indeed, they cannot be by any means so dangerous as they are reported to be, or they would have profited more by their great advantages and made more progress."

The Republican army was utterly neglected, absolutely devoid of organization, and of every military principle. Men were not lacking; there were indeed too many, but undisciplined and argumentative; nothing could be done with them. At any moment, and under any pretext, they would refuse to march out. New recruits were constantly pouring in, but they had no weapons, knew no drill, and only added fresh elements of disorder and confusion.

Biron had nothing; neither guns, muskets, nor waggons. He wrote from Niort, June 1, 1793:—

"I have not a single artillery officer, not one officer of engineers, only a hundred artillery horses in all; no train waggons, no ambulance nor hospital equipment, and three hundred Hussars are all the cavalry in a condition for service.

"We lack food, and that is becoming very serious. We live from hand to mouth, with the greatest diffi-

culty. We cannot secure a day's rations in advance, and if we attempted a march we should inevitably have no bread."

The unhappy General was in terrible straits; he did not know one of the officers under his command; he knew not whom he could trust, and was obliged to do everything himself; he worked day and night without a moment's rest. He, single-handed, by his energy and prestige over the men, succeeded in maintaining a little order and discipline, but his strength was failing, and he could not long hold out against such a life of toil.

To all his complaints and appeals Bouchotte's only reply was: "The public wish to see the troubles in La Vendée settled once for all. A general who desires to maintain his reputation as a patriot cannot display too much activity in his movements." But he sent nothing that was required.

Biron, left to himself and to his own resources, did all that was possible to man to do, and showed amazing activity.

On June 4 he went to Saumur to consult with the Central Committee of Representatives sitting there. On the 5th he held a council of war with them and the Generals. But the aristocrat had still a certain courtier-like air which annoyed the "citizens": a cane in his hand, a scrap of tricolour riband fastened to his cockade, and the like.

The commissioners insisted on immediate action. Biron, who had testified to the incohesion of the troops and the very insufficient means at his disposal,

declared that it would mean a march to inevitable disaster, and absolutely refused to make the attempt. His arguments and strong sense at last impressed the committee; the General, indeed, was a clever man, he spoke with exquisite politeness to all, and treated them with so much respect that he brought them round to his opinion.

By his advice a plan of attack was laid; four columns on four sides at once, by closing in gradually as they advanced, would effect a junction without a gap, and end by shutting the rebels into a narrow circle where they would be starved out. A fifth division was to keep guard along the coast. This plan duly carried out would end the war in a fortnight. Unfortunately, sixteen members were present at this council, and its scheme was not kept secret.

On the 6th Biron was at Tours, and detained there by a serious mutiny among the soldiers; by his ascendency, however, he succeeded in reducing it.

On June 8 he was back at Niort; on the 9th at La Rochelle, where he inspected the defences of the coast. He was still there on the 10th when disastrous news was brought him: the "brigands"—i.e. the rebels—had taken the Republicans by surprise at Doué and at Montreuil, and had taken Saumur by storm after a bloody battle. The rout was complete; the Republican troops had fired on each other; several battalions had taken to flight. Happily night fell and they were not pursued. The army, or rather what was left of it, was retiring on Tours.

The people of Niort, terrified beyond measure, were shouting for Biron; and the General, who had only too surely foreseen the catastrophe, set out in all haste to organize some resistance.

The Vendéens took more than eleven thousand prisoners at Saumur; they released them, after shaving them close and making them swear to serve no more "against religion and the King." They had also seized considerable booty: fifty field-pieces, fifteen thousand muskets, and quantities of ammunition and provisions.

On June 12 the "brigands," following up their success, took Machecoul; they might have marched on Tours, and could easily have occupied it; but, in spite of the urgency of their royalist leaders, the conquerors declined to carry on the campaign, and many of them went home to their harvest and field labour.

"If Charette and Cathelineau had but taken advantage of their astonishing success," said Napoleon, "and had combined their forces, it would have put an end to the Republic. Nothing could have checked the triumphant progress of the royalist armies. The white flag would have floated on the towers of Nôtre Dame before the armies of the Rhine could have come up to the support of their government." [1]

On reaching Niort, Biron wrote to the Committee

[1] The defeat at Saumur caused the greatest consternation. "You will never subdue this province," was written to the Convention, "till you transport the present inhabitants elsewhere in France and repeople it with another race of men."

of Public Safety a most singular letter. After mentioning the causes which brought about these defeats of the Republican forces, he requested that his post might be given to an officer who had risen from the ranks, and whose birth could give occasion to no suspicions or distrust. He distinctly perceives that, do what he will, whatever his devotion and self-sacrifice, his name and birth can never be overlooked :—

"Niort, June 12, 1793.

"I have not yet had full details of the fearful rout at Doué and Saumur. The causes are, and eternally will be till remedies are available, lack of organization and drill, and insubordination. To obey seems so remote from equality that hardly a man regards it as a duty : the result is that on many occasions brave men are of no more real use than cowards.

"Some worthy citizens seem to think that this disorder had its origin in a want of confidence in the Generals, and that the soldiers would serve better under a General chosen from among themselves. I should dispute this view if there were any Generals left to us whose military experience and habit of command in war were such as to inspire confidence. But most of our military talent is as young as the Republic itself, and their experience varies but little. Let us then try this plan, which may have more effect than any other on the duties of a soldier ; let us raise a good man from the ranks ; by combining confidence with sound drill and discipline, and the experience of the advantages it secures, he may

perhaps establish it. Plans of campaign will be at his service as much as at ours; and it will be easy to relieve him of the correspondence. I will undertake it if he wishes it; and if it should suit the new Commander, I am ready and willing to be his first aide-de-camp or the humblest soldier in the ranks."

It is well at this point to note the general impression produced on the reader by Biron's military correspondence, whether with the Minister of War, the Committee of Public Safety, or the Generals under his command. It is impossible not to be struck with the zeal, ardour and intelligence revealed in his letters. They are all remarkable for their clear and explicit style; all bear the stamp of great high-mindedness, blameless honour; irreproachable devotion to the public good, absolute disinterestedness. It may be said, without any exaggeration, that they do honour to the writer.

After the defeat at Saumur the Commissioners of the Executive Council and the Generals assembled at Tours, eager to act, and without troubling themselves as to the opinion of the Commander-in-chief, sketched a plan of campaign of which the first item was the evacuation of Angers and Nantes. The plan being drawn up was sent to Biron. He, indignant at such a proceeding, and regarding the plan as utterly bad, refused to act upon it. He declared that he should adhere to that adopted on June 4, as being the only one that could bring this disastrous war to a speedy termination.

Meanwhile, he endeavoured by redoubled energy to reorganize his army. On June 17 he was at Luçon, the next day at Olonne, then he returned to Niort, went off to La Rochelle, and came back to Niort. In spite of wretched health he was indefatigable. "The life I lead," he writes, "would kill two men stronger than I am."

Biron, perceiving that his inaction, forced upon him by having no real army, was exposing him to the most dangerous accusations, determined to try his men by an attack on a small place held by the rebels. The place was taken, but the disorder of the retreat proved to a demonstration that it was as yet impossible to undertake a campaign with such troops.

The soldiers were tired and they fell out, lying down by the roadside and refusing to march. Biron had gone forward to inspect the column at about two leagues from Niort; on seeing this undisciplined crowd his rage knew no bounds; he indignantly reproved the officers and General Salomon, who was in command of the column. Seeing Captain Rossignol—the notorious Rossignol who was become his successor—riding on his horse, he roughly exclaimed: "Is that the way, sir, to lead a company?" He made him dismount and compelled him to assemble his men.

At last, with immense difficulty, Biron succeeded in re-establishing some sort of order, and they got into Niort by about seven in the evening. The garrison was under arms, everybody was shouting, "*Vive la*

Nation ! Vive le General Biron !" A few squads began yelling : "He was not there !" The General, mad with rage and indignation, rushed towards the battalion whence these cries proceeded, and declared that the first man to speak should be shot. The silence was absolute.

"I came into the town with the rear-guard," Biron wrote, "and I had the grief of perceiving that fifty hussars could have routed the four battalions who straggled along the road like a procession, the tail entering the town twelve hours after the head."

After this retreat, a very characteristic incident shows the surroundings among which the unhappy General was condemned to live. A Captain of Hussars, named Alibert, was parading the town with the head of a Vendéen stuck on a pike. Biron saw him, and in his indignation gave orders that he should be seized and imprisoned. But a few days later Bouchotte ordered the General to set him at liberty : "that he may continue to show no quarter to our enemies." It may be imagined what discipline must have been when such barbarous deeds could go unpunished, and when the Commander-in-chief found himself thus put in the wrong by the Minister in control of the army.

Some days later the representatives of the nation and the General officers were sitting at a Council of War when Citizen Rossignol [1] begged to be heard.

[1] On July 14, 1789, Rossignol, the son of working people, an idle, quarrelsome ne'er-do-well, after trying various trades, and among them that of soldier, was wandering about Paris in search of adventures when his lucky star took him to the Bastille. He heard a noise

"I have come," said he, "in the name of all my brave comrades and their men, to announce to you that we have sworn never to fight excepting all together, and never to march out in separate divisions. Since those brigands move in a body we must do the same; we are always taken out four thousand against forty thousand; the blood of Republicans is too precious to be thus rashly shed," and he explained that he and his men would never go out again unless they were sure of being six to four.

Biron was presiding, his cane in his hand. At such preposterous sentiments he rose and declared that none but a coward could say such things, that he, Biron, would take a gun and show the men how to meet death. Rossignol persisted in his determination, and Biron, saying he should put him under arrest, ordered him out of the room.

"This act of insubordination," he says, "unexampled in my experience, filled me with pain all the keener because I had no doubt I should see it frequently repeated; it was in real despair that I implored the representatives of the people to authorize me in placing the conduct of the army in other hands."

In fact, Biron flung his sword on the table with the key of his office-room, declaring that he found it impossible to continue to command under such

and uproar; he rushed on, snatched up a gun, fired as best he might, and was numbered at the end of the day with the Conquerors of the Bastille. This title, which he aired with much skill, gained him the post of general-in-command. Meanwhile he was captain of the 35th division of foot "Gendarmerie Nationale."

conditions, and that he retired from office. However, he ended by yielding to the urgency of the representatives, who besought him to remain; and, equally at their request, he consented not to punish Rossignol, who was guaranteed to be a true and brave patriot.

From this moment Rossignol's animosity knew no restraint, and he spoke of Biron in the most offensive terms. He told the men he was a *ci-devant* (an aristocrat), and a traitor like the rest of his class, that they ought not to obey him, and in fact he everywhere preached insubordination and rebellion. The General, when he heard of it, replied that it was a mere personal matter, and affected to know nothing. Not long after, Rossignol and his company were sent to Tours. On the way, at Saint-Maixent, he spoke with such revolting insolence of the Commander-in-chief, that a certain Lieutenant de Westermann, who was present, and who had less patience than Biron, had him put under arrest in spite of his protestations.

We shall see him again ere long.

Biron's position was daily less tenable. In vain did the luckless General apply for superior officers, for reinforcements, for provisions; nothing was sent. He wrote nineteen pressing letters to the Minister without receiving a word in reply. He was obliged to do everything himself, and worked day and night without getting through his business for lack of assistance. The state of the troops was deplorable: the men were almost naked; it was with the utmost

difficulty that they were fed; on several occasions there was a lack of bread. Desertions were frequent, and discipline was maintained with the greatest difficulty; among the officers, as well as the men, insubordination was rampant, dishonesty everywhere prevailed; the soldier sold his cartridges, the carters sold the hay, the straw, the bread which were entrusted to them for transport. There was no camp furniture, no forage, absolutely no means of conveyance. They were obliged to requisition the country carts, heavy waggons drawn by oxen. It was with such means as these that he was expected to meet the enemy and quell rebellion.

But even this was not all. There were four lifferent committees sitting on the army of the Coast; one at La Rochelle, one at Niort, one at Poitiers, and one at Tours. These were appointed by the Convention, and each severally assumed the right of giving orders, directing operations, and keeping an eye on the generals. They were all the more greedy of authority because they knew nothing of military affairs. They were always at loggerheads with contradictory decisions and orders, and Biron, with all his patience, did not know which to obey.

And did he gain any credit for his efforts, his indefatigable energy, his devotion to the cause he served so loyally? Was even justice done him? Not in any way or degree. He was surrounded only by spies and men who sought his ruin.

His birth, his education, his name, his class, could not be forgiven. And yet he had sacrificed everything to his country : his health, brains, honour, all the memories of his life. It all went for nothing ; the more pledges he gave, the more were asked of him. Neither his zeal, nor his faultless loyalty, nor his ardent patriotism could disarm the base jealousy of the incapable or mean souls that were about him. Nothing could conquer the want of confidence of which he was the object; do what he would, he was and remained perpetually suspected, he was and must ever be a *ci-devant*.

Disgusted, disappointed, soaked in bitterness, Biron ceased to care for anything and mocked at everything. To one of the commissioners, who was lauding the self-styled patriots, he drily replied, "I fear nothing so much as disorganizers and club men." To the remark that he would be reported to the Convention, he replied recklessly: "Do it! If you could only know how little I should mind being guillotined."

What, in fact, could he care for life? Would not death be welcome? Would it not snatch him from the wretched existence he was leading, every day more odious and more loathed?

He had no delusions as to his ultimate fate. Meeting General Hugo one day, he said sadly : "You know me, my dear Hugo ; you know if I have served my country well, if I have passionately worshipped glory and patriotism. Well, within two months I shall have ceased to live ; the axe which seeks the

loftiest heads will also fall on mine, and my death will be hailed as that of a traitor." [1]

At last his patience and resignation came to an end; he decided on quitting the hell in which he lived and asking to retire; but first he gave himself the satisfaction of telling the Minister of War his whole mind, and he wrote, on June 23, a letter which won him at the moment many compliments, but, six months later, led him to the scaffold.

After expatiating on the mismanagement pervading the army, the want of organization, the total absence of superior officers, he does not hesitate to say what he thinks of the volunteers, cost him what it may:—

"It has never been my opinion that any military use can ever be made of agriculturists, fathers of families. They initiate a defeat long before they are in danger. I know full well the responsibility I am incurring in saying this; but I am persuaded of the truth that a Republican, when he is sure that he is doing the right thing, ought to be as ready to risk his head on the block as to expose it to the enemy."

With equal daring he expresses his opinion of Ronsin, colleague to the Minister at Tours—a man whom Bouchotte had raised in four days from the rank of Captain to that of Brigadier-General—and of the agents he employs. He writes of them with utter contempt.

"Add to these causes of disorder that your agents'

[1] *Mémoires du Général Hugo.* Vol. i.

agents preach insubordination on all hands, with rebellion and division of property. They will interfere in everything; they do nothing but embroil the service. I ought in justice to say that those I have seen seem to me too incapable and too inept to be really dangerous, for they hardly know how to read." And he adds scornfully: "They were accused of having tried to produce a ferment in the army against me, but I failed to discover it, however severe I might be." Finally he closes his letter by saying:—

"Permit me to point out to you, Citizen Minister, that by refusing all the special help which I asked of you, and which it was so easy for you to supply, and so indispensable to me to have, you have made this army, already in such a scandalous state, almost impossible to command at all.

"If all the inconvenience and vexations I feel were merely personal, I could endure them without complaint and with truly Republican patience; but they are too injurious to the service of the Republic for me not to regard it as a duty to complain with an emphasis that is no less fitting in a Republican.

"I therefore urgently request that you will either place a chief over me, or employ me on some other service, or discharge me from a responsibility which it is neither just nor possible to burthen me with any longer. In fact, my strength cannot stand it, and if it breaks down before you have found a substitute, the Republic will suffer to a very dangerous extent."

At Tours, meanwhile, the representatives complained of the General's inaction; they, who fancied that in twelve days they had created a complete military organization, wondered that Biron had not done as much, and when the General replied that he had no tents or camp furniture he was told that Dumouriez had conquered Belgium in winter, bivouacking all the time.

"The brigands whom we have to fight," they wrote to him, "have no camp furniture any more than we have, and yet they are constantly attacking us."

On June 23, just when he was writing to the Minister and to the Committee of Public Safety to announce his retirement, Biron was called up by the Central Committee at Tours to go there and discuss the adoption of a new plan; this time there was no idea of evacuating Nantes; on the contrary, it was to be rescued. Biron answered that he could not quit Niort, which was in danger from the rebels, and refused to move. Without paying any more attention to the Commander-in-chief than if he simply did not exist, the Central Committee resolved to march to the aid of Nantes, and ordered Biron in the name of the Public Safety to co-operate in their plan.

The General might have been wroth at so unseemly a proceeding, so contrary to all the rules of rank and respect, but he had no longer the heart to care; had he not, in fact, practically resigned the command? He therefore replied that he should put no obstacle in the way of the plan being carried out;

he agreed that the General commanding at Tours should march on Nantes; he consented to tell off three thousand men of his army to co-operate in the movement, but he could do no more because it would involve weakening the defence of the coast.

This done, he wrote to the Minister of War and the Committee of Public Safety, repeating his resignation:—

"As my responsibility ceases at the moment when the Central Committee chooses to influence military operations by discussing and directing them with a publicity which must impair their effect, I can no longer command the army. I beg you therefore to tell me at once to whom I am to resign the command."

The Committee of Public Safety met on June 28 to deliberate on Biron's despatches, and pronounced him right on every point. They disapproved of the Council of War held at Tours, and the commissioners who had sat on it were to be recalled. They then decided that: General Biron, being possessed of the confidence of the nation, it is his part to direct all military operations with perfect freedom, and unfettered by influence either private or public. That he alone is to form the plan he may judge the most advantageous and useful to the Republic. They concluded that the interests of the Republic did not allow of their accepting the General's resignation.

This was more than all that Biron asked; still he wrote: "The Committee's decision filled me with

regret by requiring me to continue in command of the army. I obeyed out of respect, but it was not difficult to foresee that the interests of the Republic would presently be as nothing compared to that of slandering and getting rid of the man who had dared to defy the disorganizing party."

A letter from the Committee of Public Safety accompanied the official decision; it did full justice to Biron's services:—

"Since you were transferred to the departments in the West you have been constantly engaged in forming and organizing the army: you drew up a plan of campaign; you have justified our hopes.

"The chief difficulties which might have stood in the way of your success are now removed; all will concur in your military projects. You have served your country because you love it; you will continue to serve the Republic; and it is at the head of the army you command that you will best serve it, in circumstances when your successes must have the greatest influence on liberty.

"We expect it of your civic zeal and your devotion to the Republic, General, that you will remain in command of the army on which the Republic founds its hopes."

Biron could only bow to such marks of esteem, and so he did.

Nantes, meanwhile, was seriously threatened by the Catholic army, numbering nearly 80,000 men. On July 29 and 30, the town was fiercely attacked, but it made a vigorous resistance and the rebels were

repulsed. They did not, however, raise the siege, but awaited a favourable moment to repeat the attack.

By the 24th Biron had made a plan for relieving Nantes. He explained to the generals in command at Tours that to support their advance the legion of the North, under Westermann, was to attack Parthenay. He himself would protect all the points where he could effect such a diverson as would cover their advance.

On the 25th Westermann surprised a force of ten thousand "brigands"; he killed eight hundred, and put the rest to rout. Then, continuing his success, he set fire to the Château of La Rochejaquelein and that of Lescure, and marched on Châtillon to get by Cholet to Nantes.

The enemy was awaiting him at Châtillon. Westermann utterly defeated them and took possession of the town. "Courage, my dear General," Biron writes to him, "We should soon end the war if only you and I were employed."

Unluckily, Westermann, his head turned by success, was not prepared for the enemy to act on the offensive. On July 5 he was taken by surprise, and completely routed in his turn.

On July 2, Biron had gone in person to take command of the army by Saumur, and to march on Nantes. "If only five or six thousand of the Tours contingent will but fight," said he to Philippeaux, the commissioner from the Convention, "I will pledge myself to win the battle and end the war."

Just as he was starting, he received an order from the Minister of War to release Citizen Rossignol and send him to Paris to give an account of his conduct. "I placed this order in the hands of the representatives of the nation," says Biron, "saying to them that, as Citizen Rossignol had not been imprisoned by my orders, I had no right to let him out of prison." They undertook the matter.

Biron left Niort on July 4 at three in the afternoon. He reached Tours and from thence went to Saumur. On the 7th he was at Angers. He had no sooner arrived there than he was told that the "brigands" had retired from the neighbourhood of Nantes and the town was open. A march on Nantes was therefore needless. At the same time he learnt that the Committee of Public Safety, on the strength of Ronsin's report, had, on July 1, passed a decree completely neutralizing that of June 28; Ronsin and the National Commissioners, who were to have been recalled, were on the contrary confirmed, in view of the *usefulness of their services to the army!*

This time the cup overflowed. Biron, utterly disgusted and unable to endure more, determined to resign his command come what might. He wrote, July 10, to Bouchotte, to desire him to forward his resignation at once to the Convention. He was "in such pain, so ill, that he might at any moment be compelled to place the command in other hands, and in fact he should do so at the end of a week if he received no reply." His resignation stands in these terms:—

"As my exhausted strength and bad health no longer permit me to hold the Command-in-chief of the army of the Coast of La Rochelle, in such a way as to be serviceable for the defence of the Republic, I hereby resign my command, with the declaration that, in all places and in any rank, I willingly dedicate my remaining strength and days to the service of the Republic.—Angers, July 10, 1793."

At the time when the General's retirement raised a tempest of denunciation against him, Ronsin, whom he had violently attacked, wrote as follows to the Committee of Public Safety :—

"I must frankly own that Biron's conduct is really appalling in the eyes of the true defenders of the Republic. His tardiness, his vacillations on the march, his persecution of the best patriots, and more than all, his position as a *ci-devant* and the memory of his former connections, all give cause to fear that he will allow our army to perish little by little.

"This is what all watchful Republicans think ; few dare write it to you, and I regard it as my duty, being convinced that you are worthy to hear the truth, and will hasten to recall from this army every General of noble birth."

In the meantime, Parein, President of the Military Commission at Saumur, Lachevaudière, National Commissioner, and some others, addressed to the Convention endless appeals, and the most absurd accusations of Biron. He was said to be surrounded by Germans only, to be receiving money from

England, from Spain, from the Stadhouder, to be making terms with the Catholic army, and what not! The truth was, he could not be forgiven for being an aristocrat: "This man is no true *sans-culotte*," wrote one of his accusers.

The Convention was beginning to pay serious attention to all these imputations cast on the Commander-in-chief of the army in the West.

On July 10, the Convention demanded of the Committee of Public Safety a report on Biron's proceedings. On the following day the Committee replied: "We cannot conceal the fact that there is no positive allegation of wrong-doing against the General; but he is blamed for not having shown all the activity that was needed. The commissioners of the Convention are unanimous in their reports. Biron himself admits that his frequent ailments, his attacks of gout and his worn-out health, make him unfit to fulfil the duties entrusted to him by the Republic."

On July 16, at six in the morning, a courier brought to Biron the order to place the command in the hands of General Beysser, and to go to Paris to give an account of his conduct: at two that afternoon he set out for Paris. Not far from Etampes he met another post-chaise on the way to Tours. It conveyed Rossignol, returning triumphant to the army.

Biron, whose health prevented his travelling by night, reached Paris only on the 19th. He put up at the Hôtel de la Paix, Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin.

On the 20th he was told by the Minister of War that the Executive Council intended to examine him that evening at ten o'clock. His explanations were ill-received, and the General begged for a few days' delay to enable him to draw up a full report of his conduct. This was granted.

But during the interval his enemies were busy; on July 25 a warrant of arrest was issued against him, and that very evening he was arrested and lodged in the Abbaye.

Biron at once began to prepare his defence. On the 25th he had written to the Committee of Public Safety to ask for a copy of the allegations brought against him.

On the 28th, his report being finished, he gave it out to be copied. On the 29th his servant Boudray was arrested with his master's papers, and seals were affixed to all the papers the General had left at Montrouge and at the Hôtel de la Paix. On that day the General was imprisoned in Sainte-Pélagie.

CHAPTER XXX.

1793.

Biron's defence—The Queen is executed—The Duc d'Orléans—Biron tried and condemned—His execution.

No sooner was Biron placed in Sainte-Pélagie than he demanded his trial, and he sent to the Committee of Public Safety the defence he had just composed.[1]

In this paper the General defends himself with great skill and frankness; he shows in the clearest way what an incredible rabble of peasants had been placed under his command, and the impossibility of doing anything whatever with such troops.

"My conscience does not reproach me for anything," he says quite simply; "I did all that was in my power, and, in such difficult circumstances, I do not even believe that anyone else could have done better in my place. If you will but look back on my whole life, you will see whether I have ever hesitated for an instant between my dearest personal interests and those of my country." And he ends with these words, so full of noble pride:—

"I therefore ask that, on the strength of the report

[1] This document, too long to be reproduced, exists in the National Archives, W 305, No. 370, part 2.

laid before the Convention, both the Committee of Public Safety and the provisional Executive Council should pronounce that I have served the Republic well and deserved well of my country, and that I may take with me into the retirement which my health requires, this satisfaction which is really worthy of a Republican soldier."

This dignified appeal found no reponse. Fresh accusations hindered justice, and Biron was left in Sainte-Pélagie.

His health grew daily worse; he could scarcely move for gout and rheumatism.

He sent a letter to the Convention, petitioning to be tried without delay, so as to go into the country and restore his broken health. This letter was read at the sitting of Wednesday, September 4, 1793. His old friend, Lecomte-Puyraveau, ventured to speak in support of his request: "I desire," said he, "that the same favour should be extended to Biron as you have already granted to Anselme and Ferrand, who lay under no less grave suspicions. At their request their detention at the Abbaye was mitigated to confinement to their own dwellings. I think that in humanity you should do for Biron, who is ill, what you did for Anselme and Ferrand, and I ask that Biron should be under arrest in his own house, under strong and safe keeping."

The Assembly seemed disposed to yield, when a voice was raised to move the previous question. "M. Biron is under suspicion by his actions and feelings," said a member. "He ought to be kept in

prison like all the rest till sentence is pronounced." And the previous question was adopted.

Biron had the consolation in prison of the society of his aide-de-camp, Rutaut, who worshipped him, and who, at the risk of his life, had insisted in sharing his chief's fortunes.[1]

During his detention Biron beyond a doubt entertained the idea of bribing his gaolers and escaping. He sent to ask the Marquis de Gontaut to procure him a large sum of money, offering him in return certain moneys he had in the Bank of England.[2] The Marquis consented, all the more readily because his brother and his sister-in-law had emigrated to England, and the money might have been of the greatest service to them there. But at this juncture the Marquis himself was arrested, with his wife, and the negotiation came to nothing.[3]

While Biron was in prison he heard of the trial and execution of the unhappy Queen. The bitter reflections this event must have inspired may be

[1] After Biron's execution he was released. In 1815 he was *député* for the department of the Meurthe.

[2] The Marquis de Gontaut had remained on terms of affectionate intimacy with Biron. When the General retired, as he possessed nothing after the Guéménée bankruptcy, M. de Gontaut bought for him a small house at the foot of his park of Montgermont, near Melun, and was about to offer it to him when Biron was taken to Sainte-Pélagie.

[3] They remained in prison till the death of Robespierre. On the morning of that memorable day they had heard their sentence shouted in the streets, and both praying to God Almighty, they awaited the moment when the cart should carry them away. A friend, Mme. Dubois de Lamotte, who had agreed to communicate by signal the most important events, hung a large placard out of an attic window opposite; on it they read the words "Robespierre is dead." They understood that they were saved.

imagined, and his melancholy thoughts of the past. Not long before, the Princesse de Lamballe had also perished under circumstances, if possible, even more tragical. She was at Turin, out of all danger. When she heard that the Queen's life was threatened, she voluntarily came back to Paris to try to rescue her, thus giving a rare and noble example of fidelity in misfortune. Her dreadful end is too well known to be related here.

Biron soon learnt that his old friend, the Duc d'Orléans, had likewise forfeited his life to the Revolution. The Prince and his family were in prison at Marseilles, in Fort Saint-Jean. On October 20 the commissioners of the Convention took him out and brought him to Paris. He arrived the day after the executions of the Girondins, and was confined in the Conciergerie. On November 4 he was brought before the Revolutionary tribunal; tried, sentenced, and executed, all within two hours. We must render homage to the firmness of his demeanour to the last. After hearing the sentence which condemned him to death, he withdrew, escorted by a dozen gendarmes with drawn swords. He walked through the yards and gates of the Conciergerie with a firm and calm mien. His look was so dignified that he seemed to command the soldiers who guarded him.

When he had returned to his cell, a priest, the Abbé Lothringer, came to see him, sent by Fouquier-Tinville to take his confession. The Prince first asked him if he were on the right side. The Abbé confessed that he had taken the oath, but repented

and wished to retract. The Duc then knelt down and made a general confession of his whole life.

Four unhappy wretches were executed at the same time as the Duc d'Orléans; Coustard, of Nantes, a member of the Convention; Goudier, a stockbroker; Brousse, a smith, and Nicolas Laroque, a soldier seventy-three years of age. When this old man saw the Prince brought into the condemned cell whence the executioner fetched his victims, he said to him in a loud voice, "I no longer regret life, since the man who ruined my country is to get the reward of his crimes. It only humiliates me to be compelled to die on the same scaffold." The Prince heard this invective and made no reply.

It was some little distance from the Conciergerie to the Place de la Révolution; at first few people were about, as it had not been known that the Duc d'Orléans was of the party. The Prince was handsomely powdered and looked very well; his hands were tied behind his back, and his coat thrown open over his shoulders; the coat was grey, with a black collar. When the cart came past the Palais Royal, the wretches who drove it stopped for ten miuutes in the hope that the sight of this palace, where he had spent so many happy years, would torture the Prince, and embitter the last moments of his life.

A crowd had collected and hurled abuse and yells at the prisoner. But the Prince was unmoved. He held his head high with great gravity, and as he looked down on the mob not a muscle of his face quivered.

At last the procession moved on and reached the Place de la Révolution. When he saw the guillotine the Prince turned pale, but he still held his head erect, and his eye was steady. He went quickly up the steps, glanced round at the throng, helped the executioner to unfasten his cravat, did not say a word or offer the least resistance.

His head was then held up to the gaze of the multitude.

Biron was not long to survive the friend of his childhood, the man who more than any one else had dragged him into the vortex of the Revolution. And indeed, he only wished that all should be over. He said to Beugnot, who was his fellow-prisoner, "These people have worried me too long; they are going to cut my head off, but then at any rate there will be an end." At his trial he would not even defend himself.

It was not till December 25 that Biron's indictment was formulated by Robespierre's desire. On the 9th of Nivose, at ten in the morning, Biron was brought up "free and unfettered" before the Criminal Court of the Revolution.[1]

[1] This is the indictment drawn up against Biron. Antoine Quentin Fouquier-Tinville, public prosecutor to the Criminal Court extraordinary, sets forth:—

"That Biron, being honoured with the confidence of the Republic and in command of its armies, more especially that charged with the extermination of the brigands of La Vendée, instead of justifying it by displaying the zeal and activity the country had a right to expect of him, had by sheer inertia become almost a part of the hostile army, of which his culpable inaction had favoured the increase and victory over the brave soldiers of the Republic whom he ought to have led to triumph, but who became the victims of the tardiness and negligence of which he had

The examination of the accused was short, and elicited nothing that we do not know. The chief count against him was his connection with the late Duc d'Orléans and his sons. The public prosecutor then summed up, the counsel for the defence was heard, and the sitting adjourned till next day at eight in the morning.

On the following day the President summed up. Twelve witnesses were called for the prosecution; among them were Grammont, the actor, head of the general staff of the army, Merlin, Chandieu, etc.; there were but four witnesses for the defence. After they had been examined the following question was put to the jury :—

so constantly given proof : That Biron, in fact, born in the class of privileged *ci-devants*, and having passed his life in the midst of a corrupt Court, slavishly cringing to a master, had only assumed the mask of patriotism—like the traitors Custine, La Fayette, Dumouriez, and many more—to deceive the nation as to the side he seemed to espouse, and to take more sure advantage of the confidence it placed in him to cast it again into the iron bondage of despotism : That he has, moreover, always shown himself to be the foe of patriots whom he has persecuted, of brave soldiers whom he has tried to dishearten by calumniating them—a system which has always been in favour with Dumouriez, Wimpffen, and other traitors : That he has always preferred to have Germans about him with whom he could lay his treacherous plots in a foreign language.

"In accordance with the above charges, the public prosecutor has drawn up this indictment against Biron for having conspired against the unity and indivisibility of the Republic, and the peace of the internal safety of the French Empire; and for having betrayed the interests of the Republic by abusing his position, etc.

"FOUQUIER-TINVILLE."

His counsel for the defence was citizen La Fleutrie. The Court consisted of citizens Armand Martial Herman, President; Gabriel Deliège, Etienne Masson, and Pierre Louis Raymey, judges. Citizen Fleuriot sat for the public prosecutor. There were five men sworn on the jury.

"Citizen jurymen, there has been a conspiracy against the internal and external safety of the Republic. Is Armand Louis Biron, ex-General of one of the armies of the Republic, proved guilty of having taken part in that conspiracy?"

The answer was in the affirmative.

Biron was sentenced to death, and to be executed within twenty-four hours.

The Duc heard his sentence with a smile, and his courage never for an instant failed him. He preserved a smiling air to the last. On being taken to the condemned cell he asked for a fowl and a bottle of Bordeaux; he dined with perfect composure, and read for the rest of the evening; then he lay down on a wretched mattress supplied by Langlois, his gaoler, and slept as peacefully as if he had been in his own home.

Next day, before the executioner came for him, he ordered some oysters and a bottle of white wine; he was still eating when he was called out. "Citizen," said he, "allow me to finish and then I will not keep you waiting long." Calling the warder, he said to him, with the civility which characterized all he said: "Langlois, fetch me a glass." Langlois obeyed. Biron filled the glass and offered it to the executioner. "Take this wine," said he, "you must need it, in your trade." Then, turning to his fellow-prisoners: "It is all over, gentlemen," he said; "I am going on the long journey."

He then left the place and got into the cart. The weather was gloomy and cold, and day was declining.

The crowd on the road was not large. How many of those who saw the dreadful procession pass had any idea that this man, who looked so calm and proud, had been one of the creatures who had been most loved in this world, if not one of the happiest; and that, after having tasted, nay exhausted, all earthly joys, he could be glad to see the hour of deliverance at hand, and was quitting life with profound disgust for it! Biron preserved his composure even on the scaffold; his features never for an instant changed; he submitted to his fate without fear and without bravado.[1]

Thus perished ignominiously and of a horrible death the man who had united all the charms, graces, and fascinations of his time.

As was stated at the beginning of these volumes, this history of the Duc de Lauzun has been written with no other object than that of making the world better acquainted with a man who has often been hardly judged. We have shown our hero as he really was, without endeavouring to palliate his errors or his misdeeds, but holding an equitable balance between what he may be justly blamed for, and what was the outcome of the time he lived in and the society he belonged to. After closely following him through a chequered career, we must

[1] This is the register of his death :—

"On the 20th of Nivose (January 9, 1794), Year II. of the Republic: certificate of the death of Armand Louis Biron on the 11th of this month (December 31, 1793). Profession: Commander-in-chief of the Republican armies, aged forty-six, native of Paris and living there, Rue des Piques. Also of Montrouge.

"(*Signed*) DELTROIT."

own that we have never detected in him a single feeling that was other than chivalrous, noble and lofty. Our end will be attained if we have shown that the Duc de Lauzun was not, as has too often been asserted, a common reprobate, but indeed possessed of admirable qualities of heart and brain, intelligence, loyalty and courage.

We have endeavoured, at the same time, to restore the last hours of that eighteenth-century life, frivolous and trivial indeed, but attractive and delightful withal. We hope we may have succeeded.

AN INVENTORY OF THE PROPERTY SEIZED AT MONTROUGE.

LIBERTÉ—ÉGALITÉ—FRATERNITÉ.

In the month of Prairial, Year II. of the French Republic, one and indivisible.

Report given in by Dupasquier and Picault, members of the Conservatoire and of the temporary Committee of Arts, of the pictures, furniture, bronzes, marbles and china, confiscated and seized, to be removed from the house at Montrouge, belonging to the *émigré* Biron. To wit:—

FURNITURE.

1. A small article in mahogany with mirrors and several shelves.
2. A mahogany table in two parts, one covered with cloth.
3. Another mahogany table of an oval form, or it might serve to contain a collection of diamonds.
4. An English weighing instrument with scales, weights, and half-pound standard, complete, and the box.
5. An Indian quiver full of arrows said to be poisoned.
6. A mahogany table with leaves, in three divisions.

CHINA.

7. Twenty-seven dishes of antique porcelain.
8. A bowl and two saucers.
9. Four bowls or saucers with handles.
10. Seven little images in agate (jade?).
11. Two large china bowls with blue flowers on a white ground.
12. Another bowl ditto.

PICAULT.

National archives, F 17, 1190.

EPILOGUE.

We must not close this history of the Duc de Lauzun without telling what became of the principal personages who have figured in our narrative, whom we have met with most frequently, and to whom we have become in some sort attached.

First as to the Duchesse de Biron. As we have seen, she was so rash as to return to France to try to save the little that remained of her fortune. She was arrested towards the end of 1793[1] and confined in the Convent des Anglaises. There she found the old dowager Maréchale de Biron (*née* Larochefoucauld de Roye), whose age and infirmities had not saved her from imprisonment. One day "Citoyenne Biron" was called to appear before the Revolutionary tribunal. "Which?" asked the gaoler, "There are two of them." The official had been ordered to produce but one Duchesse de Biron, but his hesitation was of no long duration; for fear of mistake he carried both the ladies before the Court.

With them were brought up Gabriel de Polastron, Victor de Broglie, Guignart de Saint-Priest, Linguet,

[1] She was then living in the Rue de Lille, near the Fontaine de Grenelle.

the lawyer, and finally the old Maréchal Philippe de Noailles-Mouchy and his wife. When they came to fetch the old man out of prison he desired the men to make no noise; the Maréchale was ill, and he did not wish her to know of his departure. "She must come too," said the warder, "she is on the list. I will go to call her."

"Do nothing of the kind," cried the Maréchal. "If she must come, I will be the person to tell her."

He went to her room and spoke these noble words: "Madame, you must come down. It is God's will, let us adore His ways. You are a Christian; I am going with you and will never leave you."

When the news was known in the prison all the inmates formed in a line where the venerable couple must pass, and every face expressed respectful grief. Someone cried, "Courage, Monsieur le Maréchal!" and M. de Mouchy replied in a firm voice, "When I was but fifteen I led a storming party for my King, now I am near eighty I can mount the scaffold for my God."[1]

The Duchesse de Biron showed no less heroism. Knowing that the atmosphere of the Court was pestilential from the crowd that attended the trials, she begged one of her friends to give her a little cotton wool to put in her nostrils: "You know," said she, "how sensitive I am to bad smells, and I will not risk the chance of feeling faint, for it might be supposed that I was afraid."

[1] *Histoire du Tribunal Révolutionnaire.* H. Wallon.

The act accusing her contains only these words: "The woman Biron, widow of the General whose treason has met the punishment it deserved, has kept up a correspondence with the enemies of the Republic, and had to that end quitted French territory, to which she returned in contravention of the law, when she was no longer necessary to her husband's treason."

The Duchesse de Biron was sentenced and executed June 24, 1794:[1] with her perished the old Maréchale de Biron, the Duc and Duchesse de Mouchy, and all we have just named. All showed heroic courage and deep contempt for their murderers.[2]

The famous Duchesse de Gramont, who played so important a part in our narrative, did not escape. She was brought before the Revolutionary tribunal with her friend, the Duchesse du Châtelet, who, after quitting France, had returned by her advice. When Mme. de Gramont was asked whether she had not sent money to various *émigrés*, she haughtily

[1] Her mother, the Duchesse de Boufflers, was still living. "She is an odious woman," wrote Mme. de Custine, "and was little touched by her daughter's death. She was amply consoled by getting her property." Mme. de Boufflers died in 1797.

[2] The following is a list of the objects found in the house of "the woman Boufflers, No. 181, condemned as Biron's widow":—

1. Seven small pictures, portraits in the style of Porbus, on copper, six of them in a silver gilt frame, and another as a miniature in a locket with a silver back; valued at 72 livres.

2. Six pictures from over the doors, painted by Sauvage; four in the drawing room, and two in the bedroom: 24 inches high by 48 wide; valued at 300 livres.

National Archives, F 7, 1190. These objects were handed over to "Citoyenne Montmorency, widow Boufflers, mother of the said widow Biron."

replied: "I was going to say no; but my life is not worth a lie."

After that she thought only of saving her friend, who was present, and who stood with clasped hands and downcast eyes in perfect silence. "That you should kill me," said Mme. de Gramont to her judges; "me—who scorn and detest you, who would have stirred up all Europe against you—nothing can be more natural. But what has this angel done to harm you?" and she pointed to Mme. du Châtelet, "who has suffered without a murmur, and whose whole life has been spent in acts of gentleness and humanity."

They were both sentenced and died together on the scaffold.

The fascinating Duchesse de Fleury was more fortunate. She escaped the dreadful fate of so many of her contemporaries. She was arrested as an *émigrée* and sent to the prison Des Anglaises, where among many friends she found the Duchesse de Biron. Walpole writes: "It is said that the poor Duchesse de Biron is again arrested, and at the Jacobins, and with her a young feather-brain who does nothing but sing all day. And who think you may that be? Only our pretty little wicked Duchesse de Fleury. By her singing and not sobbing I suppose she was weary of her Tircis, and is glad to be rid of him. This new blow will, I fear, overset Mme. de Biron again." (To the Miss Berrys, Oct. 15, 1793.)

Mme. de Fleury was not subdued for long by the

surroundings amid which she was placed. She might daily watch the disappearance of some relation or friend; her levity and recklessness soon got the upper hand, and the prospect of a dreadful and imminent death could not hinder her from singing and laughing. She was adored by all her fellow-captives, and André Chénier, who shared her imprisonment, wrote for her the verses called "La Jeune Captive," too well known to need quoting here, in which he gives pathetic expression to the hopes of a youthful prisoner.

"I do not wish to die yet;" the graceful poem ends with these words; and the wish was fulfilled. The 9th of Thermidor set her free. She made use of her liberty to get a divorce; she then fell in love with a certain M. de Montrond, a clever man and something of an adventurer. She married him, and they left Paris to enjoy their happiness in solitude. It was not, however, very lasting; at the end of a few years Mme. de Montrond was again divorced. Cured for ever of marrying, she varied her life with occasional intrigues. One day having gone to see the Emperor Napoleon, he roughly asked her: "Are you still so fond of men?" "Yes, Sire," said she, "when they are civil." She died in Paris, January 17, 1820, aged forty-nine.

Let us now turn to the two women who played the leading parts in our hero's life. Princess Czartoriska lived till 1835, but the last fifty years of her life were darkened by many sorrows. She saw the destruction of her fatherland and the ruin of her

friends. "My tears often flow," she wrote to Delille in 1794, "when I think of my native land, the land so dear to my heart, where I lived as a child, where I was a happy girl, a happy wife, a very happy mother, a happy friend!" In 1830 she was still living at Pulawy with her daughter, the Princess of Wurtemberg;[1] her grandson, Adam of Wurtemberg, at the head of a Russian army, turned her out of the place. The Chateau was bombarded and sacked, and then, by order of Nicolas I., became a school for young ladies. Mme. Czartoriska and her daughter settled on their estate at Wysock, where she died in 1835.

What became of Mme. de Coigny, Lauzun's second and perhaps his truest great passion?

During the years of emigration she too was divorced from her husband; she returned to France in 1801. She still hated the Bourbons and the *ancien régime*, but the excesses of the Revolution had sickened her. She had a fanatical admiration for Bonaparte, and set him above all the heroes of antiquity. "The guardian angel of Napoleon," she wrote, "is the guardian angel of France." She had preserved her high spirit and wit; her repartees and jests were as popular as ever, but it was evident that she endured a secret sorrow. She was devout after her fashion: in the dark she was afraid of the Devil.

[1] This Princess was divorced in 1792: it was her son, Adam of Wurtemberg, who turned them out of Pulawy. When he offered to make her an allowance she replied: "Monsieur, I have not the honour of knowing you. I no longer have a son, and I care little for fortune."

She had made up her mind to growing old, and kept up no feminine arts and graces; she was always dressed plainly but with taste. To the last she preserved the liveliness of her wit, the serenity and amiability of her temper. She was carried off by cholera at the age of seventy-three, dying September 13, 1832, at her little house in the Rue de la Ville-l'Evêque.[1]

To conclude, we must devote a few lines to Mme. de Rothe and the Archbishop of Narbonne, of whom we have so often spoken.

Even before the revolution the archbishop's affairs had been greatly entangled: he was up to the ears in debt notwithstanding his vast revenues, and the beautiful estate of Hautefontaine had to be sacrificed. Then, when the political storm burst, Mgr. Dillon took refuge in London with his niece, Mme. de Rothe. Before long the poor woman fell into a decline and rapidly became worse. She showed in the most touching manner the deep attachment she had felt for the worthy prelate. She concealed her sufferings to spare him anxiety, and continued to do the honours of his house that he might see no change and miss no amusement.

On the last day of her life she invited M. d'Osmond to dinner that he might talk to the archbishop, who had become very deaf; she had not the strength to

[1] Her daughter Fanny married General Sebastiani, who went as Ambassador to Turkey. Mme. de Sebastiani died at Constantinople in 1807 at the birth of a daughter who, in 1825, married the Duc de Choiseul-Praslin [by whom she was murdered in 1847].

speak loud enough to be heard by him. Oysters were served, and she liked them; the archbishop pressed her to eat, and she amiably tried to swallow one. Then she said in an undertone to M. d'Osmond, with whom she was very intimate, "Do not let him eat much; I am afraid his digestion will receive a shock." She then led the conversation to subjects which would interest her uncle, saying a word now and then. At dessert Mgr. Dillon left the room for a few minutes. As soon as he had left, "I was waiting for this," she said. "D'Osmond, lock him into his room—ring the bell."

A servant came in and she desired him to go to the archbishop and find some excuse to detain him: "At his age painful scenes are not good," she added, "and it will soon be over." M. d'Osmond wanted to send for a doctor: "What for," said she, "it will be useless. But send at once for a priest, that will be better for the archbishop."

Within ten minutes of having locked him out she had ceased to breathe, and the archbishop was always convinced that she had died suddenly in high health. "It is such a comfort to me," he would often say, "to think that she did not suffer, nor foresee the end."[1]

[1] Mme. de Rothe's devotion, of which only a woman could be capable, found an imitator in Louise de Polastron, who lived with the Comte d'Artois. Having fallen into a consumption, she never complained, for fear of disturbing Monsieur's convenience, and he saw and suspected nothing. She was dying, and he never perceived it; and she had the courage to conceal it from the Prince almost till her latest breath.

He himself died in England in 1814.

The devotion shown by Fersen to the Royal Family during the Revolution is well known. When the tragedy was over he returned to Sweden, where he held a high appointment at Court. In 1810 a riot broke out, and Fersen, whose conduct had always been pure and noble, was assassinated by the populace; he died under the most barbarous treatment in a public square in Stockholm.

Mme. de Buffon never left Paris throughout the Revolution. When she saw Mme. de Lamballe's head carried round on a pike, she dropped into a chair, crying, "Oh God! they will carry my head like that some day." Even after her royal lover's execution Mme. de Buffon remained in the capital; but, notwithstanding her loudly expressed indignation at the crimes she had witnessed, she remained unmolested. She was faithful to the memory of M. d'Orléans, and at the risk of her life busied herself about the affairs of his sons, whom she helped to escape from prison at Marseilles. M. de Talleyrand subsequently wished to marry her, but she could not overcome her repugnance to marrying a bishop. She fell into the greatest poverty. A Swiss gentleman, M. Renourd de Bussière, a very agreeable man, then paid her his addresses, which she accepted and became Mme. Renourd.

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INDEX OF NAMES.

(When a name is printed in italics, refer to that.)

Adélaide, Madame, 10, 45, 281, 346.
Adhémar, Comte d', 74, 108.
Aiguillon, Duc d', 8, 102, 297, 363, 434.
Alibert (Captain), 481.
Alicury, 167.
Alquier, 384.
Amelot, 103.
Andlau, Madame d', 291.
Andouin (War Minister), 467.
Anselme, General d', 453, 497.
Arbuthnot, Admiral, 203.
Aremberg, Prince d', 356, 361.
Arnold, General, 211.
Arnould, Sophie (actress), 279.
Arrost, Viscomte d', 164, 166, 169, 193, 224.
Artois, Comte d', 3, 44, 66, 68, 83, 86, 93, 100, 109, 111, 116 f., 120, 180, 286, 337 ff., 346, 396, 514 note.
,, Comtesse d', 3, 45, 86.
Augeard (quoted), 381.

Bachaumont (quoted), 61, 319, 320.
Balbi, Madame de, 45.
Barbentane, Madame de, 113.
Barral, Abbé de, 350.
Barras, M. de, 237 note.
Barry (Jeanne Vaubernier), Vicomtesse du, 8.
Barrymore (Lady Emily Stanhope), Countess of, 63, 128, 228.
Basleroi, M. de, 197.
Basville, M., 468.
Beauharnais, M. de, 420.
Beaujolais, Duc de, 410, 462.
Beaulieu, General, 425.
Beaumont, Prince de, 319.
,, Mgr. de, Archbishop of *Paris*.
Belle Isle, Maréchale de, 2 note.
Bergnot, M., 424, 501.
Berthois, Colonel, 415.
Bertin, Mlle. (modiste), 301.
Besenval, Baron de, 71, 74, 77, 124, 344.
Beysser, 494.
Billy (Captain), 234 note.
Biron, Abbé de, 126.
,, Louis Antoine de Gontaut-Biron, Maréchal and Duc de, 57, 126, 127, 145, 148, 151, 169, 171, 218, 348, 350, 360, 398, 458.
,, (*née* de La Rochefoucauld de Roye), Maréchale de, 507.
,, Armand Louis Duc de, s e *Lauzun*.
Boehmer and Bossang (Jewellers), 312.
Bombelles, Comte de, 334.
Bonaparte, Joseph, 454.
,, Napoleon, 334, 454, 477, 511.
Bouchotte (War Minister), 471, 475, 481, 486, 492.
Boufflers, Amélie de, Duchesse de *Lauzun*.
,, Chevalier de, 359, 368.
,, Comtesse de, 132.
,, Duchesse de, 4, 101, 112, 113, 438, 509 f.
Bouillé, 173 note, 237 note, 378 f.
,, Madame de, 299, 308.
Bouillon, Duc de, 110, 280.
,, Princesse de, 94.
Bourbon, Duc de, 47, 349.
,, Duchesse de, 111, 299, 462.
Bozon de Talleyrand, M., 257.
Branecki, Grand General of Poland, 25, 27 f., 49, 53 f., 64.
Breteuil, Baron de, 313, 341.
Brienne, Loménie de, Archbishop of *Toulouse*.
Brionne, Comtesse de, 302, 319.

Broglie, Comte Victor de, 329, 427, 429, 434, 507.
„ Prince de, 215, 253, 258 f., 261, 266, 270, 272.
Brunet, General, 454, 456.
Buffon, Comtesse de, 331 f., 343, 361, 371, 430, 445, 515.
„ M. de, 2 note.
Burgoyne, General, 145.
Bussy, M. de, 157, 163, 164.

Caffarelli du Falga, 434.
Cagliostro, 296, 304 f., 314 f.
Calonne, M. de, 303, 338 f., 353.
Cambis, Madame de, 368, 440.
Campan, Madame de (quoted), 315.
Caraman, Comte de, 185.
Carignan, Marie Thérèse de, Princesse de *Lamballe*.
Carnot, 433.
Cartouche, 151 note.
Cassin, Comte de, 337.
Castellane, M. de, 459.
Castries, Duc de, 193, 226, 241.
Cathelineau, 477.
Catherine II., of Russia, 16 f., 25, 30, 48, 53 f., 91 f., 95 f., 139, 146, 322, 334 f., 347.
Caylus, M. de, 307, 309.
Chabot, Comte de, 257, 286.
Chalabre, M. de, 86.
Chalons, Madame de, 291.
Champlein, Miss, 214.
Charette, 477.
Chartres, Louis Philippe Joseph (Egalité), Duc de, afterwards Duc d'*Orléans*.
„ Louis Philippe, Duc de (afterwards King of the French), 409 f., 416, 420, 461.
Chastellux, M. de, 2 note, 193, 200, 219, 235.
Châtelet, Duc du, 148, 319, 340, 351, 360.
„ Duchesse du, 509 f.
Châtre, Madame de la, 186.
Chaumont, M., 415.
Chénier, André, 511.
Choiseul, Etienne François de Choiseul-Stainville, Duc de, 8, 10, 59 f., 71, 98, 100 f., 108, 115, 122, 133 f., 171, 187, 288, 302, 318 f., 335.
„ Louise Honorine, Duchesse de, 8, 101 f., 127, 132 f., 319 f.,
Choiseul-Gouffier, Comte de, 336.
Choiseul - Stainville, Béatrice de, Duchesse de *Gramont*.
Choisy, M. de, 233.
Clermont, Mademoiselle, 41.
„ M. de, 356.
Clinton, General, 221.
Clugny, M. de, 103.
Coigny, Chevalier de, 331.
„ Antoinette François de, 178, 285, 513 note.
„ François Aimée de, Duchesse de *Fleury*.
„ Duc de, 33, 44, 71, 74, 77, 79, 97, 101, 105, 108, 124, 160, 177.
„ Marquis de, 124, 173 note, 247, 381, 387, 402.
„ Louise Marthe (de Conflans), Marquise de, 175, 177 f., 186 f., 191, 227, 241, 247 ff., 251 f., 254, 282, 285, 290 f., 318, 321 f., 339, 364, 370, 380 ff., 392 f., 395, 401 f., 405 f., 415, 421, 425, 429, 443, 512.
Coislin, Duc de, 279.
„ Duchesse de, 239.
Condé, Prince de, 349.
Condorcet (quoted), 362.
Conflans, Louis Gabriel, Marquis de, 33, 66, 80, 83, 176 f., 291, 329.
Jeanne du Portail, Marquise de, 176.
„ Louise Marthe, Marquise de *Coigny*.
„ Louise Aglaë, Duchesse de *Montbazon*.
Contat, Mademoiselle, 117.
Conti, Louis François de Bourbon, Prince de, 101, 112 f.
„ (his son), 462.
Cornwallis, 232 f., 235.
Courchamp, M. de, 400.
Coustard, 434, 500.
Créqui, M. de, 34.
Créquy, Marquis de, 184, 307.
„ Marquise de, 308.
Creutz, Baron de (quoted), 33, 193.
Crussol, M. de, 185.
Cumberland, Anne Luttrell, Duchess of, 384.
Custine, Vicomte de, 193, 220, 235, 427, 429, 432, 436, 449 note.
Czartoriska, Isabelle Fortunée Fleming, Princess, 1, 13, 17, 26 f., 49 f., 64, 91, 138, 511.
Czartoriski, Adam Casimir, Prince, 14, 16, 23 f., 51 f., 63.

Dagobert, General, 456.
Dalberg, Baroness, 65.
Damas, Comte de, 210, 220, 328, 334.
Damel, King, 168 f.
Dampierre, M. de, 356.
Danton, 462.
Dauphin (afterwards Louis XVI.), 38, 45, 77.
„ Son of Louis XVI., 245.
Dauphiness, *Marie Antoinette*, afterwards Queen.
Deffant, Marie de Vichy-Chamrond, Marquise du (quoted), 3, 4, 7, 8, 46, 62, 68, 69, 113, 132, 171, 322.
Delessart, M., 408.
Delille, Abbé, 279.
Des Genettes (surgeon), 454.
Deux-Ponts, Marquis de, 193.
„ Guillaume, Comte de, 235, 236, 237.
Diderot (writer), 16.
Dillon, Arthur, Comte, 79, 87, 173 note, 193, 345.
„ Edward, 79, 139, 173 note, 191, 345.
„ Robert, Vicomte, 164, 166, 170, 191, 195, 210, 234 note, 235, 237.
„ Théobald, 413 f.
„ Archbishop of *Narbonne*.
„ Comtesse (*née* de Rothe), 42 f., 48, 67, 72, 159, 187 f., 243, 255, 276 f.
„ Madame Edward, 139.
Dorset, Duke of, 345.
Douai, Merlin de, 279.
Ducrest, M. de, 356.
Dumouriez, General, 407 ff., 412 f., 420, 435 f., 449, 461, 467, 488.
Duport, M. Adrien, 356.
Durfort, Comte de, 79.
„ Comtesse de, 191.
„ Louise de, Duchesse de *Mazarin*.

Electress of Saxony, 18.
Elizabeth, Madame, 108.
„ Princess, (afterwards Duchesse d'Angoulême), 164, 244.
Elliot, General, 286.
Elliott, Mrs. Grace (*née* Dalrymple), 360 f., 364, 372, 446 ff.
Enghein, Duc d', 350.
Estaing, Chevalier d', 155, 172, 173 note, 226.
Esterhazy, Prince, 124.
Eyriès, M., 165.

Fall, Governor, 166.
Fersen, Hans Axel, Count, 183, 191, 193 f., 206 f., 210, 214, 216 f., 288, 345, 515.
FitzGerald, Lord, 345.
FitzJames, Duc de, 356.
„ Duchesse de, 194, 388.
„ Marquis de, 83 note.
Fleury, Françoise de Coigny (Marquise), Duchesse de, 325 f., 387, 435, 459 f., 509 f.
„ Victor, 261.
Fontenilles, M. de, 380.
Forbes, Lord, 47 note.
Fouquier-Tinville, 469, 502 note.
Franklin, Doctor Benjamin, 142, 151.
Frederick Augustus, Elector of Saxony, 18.
Frederick the Great, of Prussia, 19, 29, 354.
Freteau, 341.
Fronsac, M. de, 175, 307.

Galvez, General Don, 237 note.
Gatti, Doctor, 4.
Gaussen, Chevalier de (quoted), 33.
Genlis, Stephanie Felicie, Comtesse de, 41, 109 f., 298, 327, 446 note.
„ Comte de, 83 note.
Geoffrin, Mme., 322.
George III., of England, 146, 149, 151.
„ Prince of Wales, 291 note, 360 note, 382, 387, 391, 399.
Georgel, Abbé, 314.
Gèsvres, Duc de, 85.
„ Duchesse de, 309 f.
Gloucester, Duchess of, 384.
Gontaut, Charles Antoine, Duc de, 4, 126, 171, 351.
„ Marquis de, 191, 399, 401, 498.
Gordon, Lord George, 334.
Gramont (Béatrice de Choiseul-Stainville), Duchesse de, 98 f., 101, 127, 133, 509 f.
Grasse, M. de, 226 note, 232, 253, 267, 293.
Grave, Chev. de, 408 f.
Graves, Admiral, 193, 199.
Grégoire, 457, 463.
Guéménée, Henri Louis M. de Rohan, Prince de, 79, 83, 117, 130, 246, 277 f., 280, 314.
„ Victoire Armande de Rohan Soubise, Princesse de, 43, 48, 58, 67, 72, 85, 94, 97, 100,

107, 116, 119, 123, 133 f., 157, 164, 171, 188, 227, 241, 244 f., 248, 326.
Guichen, 192.
Guines, Duc (Comte) de, 74, 101, 102, 124, 127, 438.

Harcourt, Duc d', 337.
Hardy, Admiral, 186.
Harland, Miss Fanny, Mme. Edward *Dillon*, 139.
Harris, Mr. (Lord *Malmesbury*).
Hatzfeldt, Mademoiselle von, 23, 27.
Haussonville M. d' (quoted), 421 note.
Havre, M. d', 79.
Heath, General, 208.
Henry, Prince, of Prussia, 20, 354.
Hugo, General, 485.
Hunter, Mrs., and daughters, 213 f., 285, 287.

Isle, Chevalier de l', 227, 248, 255, 280, 283, 302, 322, 460.

Jersey, Countess of, 382.
Joly de Fleury, 337.
Joseph II., Emperor of Austria, 90, 118 ff., 143.
Juniez, M. de, 48, 52 f.

Kellermann, 429, 436, 468.
Knox, General, 221.

La Barre, Colonel, 465.
La Bourdonnais, General, 468.
Lachevaudière, 493.
Laclos, 297, 356.
La Fayette, Marquis de, 79, 191, 362, 364 f., 391, 413, 420, 431, 435.
La Marck, Comte de, 297, 347, 356 f., 362 f., 369, 378.
Lamballe, Marie Thérèse de Savoie Carignan, Princesse de, 40 f., 72, 85, 106, 118, 299, 498, 515.
Lameth, Alexandre de, 253, 268.
,, Charles de, 235, 253.
Lamoignon, M. de, 343.
Lamothe, Mme. de, 312 f., 316, 377.
La Morlière, M. de, 427.
Langeron, Marquis de, 185.
La Porte, M. de, 431.
Laroque, 500.
La Touche, M. de., 256 f., 266, 268 f.
Lauraguais, M. de, 47 note, 80.
Laurent, Mademoiselle, 435, 445, 449.
Lautrec, Comte de, 177.
Lauzun, Amélie de Boufflers, Duchesse de, afterwards Duchesse de Biron, 2, 4, 6, 101, 112, 126 f., 131 f., 349, 368, 438 ff., 507.
Lauzun, Armand Louis de Gontaut-Biron, Duc de, afterwards Duc de Biron, living at Mouzon, 1, 13; goes to Warsaw, 14; goes to Berlin, 18; at Versailles, 1775, 46; negotiates with Russia, 50 ff., 63; removed to Sarreguemines, 62; in Paris, 1775, 66; life at Court, 67 ff.; political schemes, 90 ff.; visit to Chanteloup, 98; devotion to the Queen, 105; his affairs, 1777, 125 f.; at Vancouleurs, 137; in London, 140; leaves England, 153; authorized to levy a regiment, 154; visit to Hautefontaine, 158; expedition to Senegal, 162; meets Madame de Coigny, 175; goes to America, 193; life at Newport, 213; his friendship with Fersen, 217; sent to Lebanon, 218; cavalry engagement at Yorktown, 233; returns to France, 238; sails again for America, 256; a stay at Terceira, 258; sick of fever, 267; goes to Philadelphia, 271; left in command of the troops, 275; returns home, 287; treated with neglect, 288; a visit to London, 291; joins the "Egalité" party, 294; sees the Devil, 307; at Montrouge, 327; missions to England, 333; correspondence with Montmorin, 335; takes the title of Duc de Biron, 1788, 351; connected with Mirabeau, 353; elected deputy to the States-General, 359; refuses to go to Corsica, 370; a tour of inspection, 383; on service, 390; a mission to London, 394; imprisoned for debt, 397; returns to France, 402; quartered at Valenciennes, 409; fighting in Flanders, 416; joins the Army of the Rhine, 427;

ordered to Nice, 445; in Paris, 1793, 446; fighting in Piémont, 453; ordered to La Rochelle, 469; fighting in the West, 476; resigns his command and goes to Paris, 494; arrested, 495; tried and guillotined, 503.
Laval, Duc de, 33.
„ Montmorency, Marquis de, 193, 268.
Lecomte-Puyraveau, 497.
Lejay, Madame, 355.
Leopold, Emperor of Austria, 405.
Lespinasse, Mademoiselle, 81, 113.
Lévis, Duc de (quoted), 177, 183, 295.
Leyton, Polly, 214 f.
Ligne, Charles Prince de (quoted), 19, 28, 33, 38, 71, 74, 88, 103, 181, 280, 298, 302 f., 322 f., 347, 382.
Linguet, 500.
Loménie, Comte de, 253, 268.
Lorraine, Prince de, 63.
Lothringer, Abbé, 499.
Louis XV., King of France, 2, 5, 115, 117, 148.
Louis XVI., 3, 9 f., 31 f., 60, 68, 82 f., 87, 89, 116 f., 121, 130, 136, 147 f., 160, 174 f., 179, 235 f., 238, 276, 279, 293, 311, 320, 333, 338, 340 f., 361, 363, 369, 372 f., 377 f., 425, 429 f., 449.
Louis XVII., *Dauphin*.
Louise, Madame, 47.
Lückner, Maréchal de, 104, 424, 426.
Lusignan, M. de, 356.
Luttrell, Anne, Duchess of *Cumberland*.
Luzerne, M. de, 272, 385.
Luxembourg, Chevalier de, 7, 71, 93, 296.
„ Maréchale de, 4, 101, 112 f., 126 f., 131 f., 349, 439.

Machault, M., 10 f.
„ Madame, 3, 45, 86, 120.
„ "petite," Princess *Elizabeth*.
Maillébois, M. de, 286.
Maine, Duchesse du, 110.
Malesherbes, 62, 102.
Malmesbury (Harris), Earl of, 23, 388.
Mandlaw, Mr., 269.
Mandrin, 151 note.
Marat, 424, 462.
Maria Theresa, Empress, 36, 38, 60, 90, 117, 121, 123, 225.
Marie Antoinette, Queen, 3, 7, 10, 31 f., 48 f., 54, 58, 60, 66 f., 70 f., 83 f., 92 f., 102, 106, 111, 115, 117 f., 124, 129, 148, 156 f., 164, 173 note, 174 f., 180, 191, 193 f., 225, 247, 277, 279, 293, 312, 317, 338, 344 f., 372, 377, 381, 385, 430, 498.
Marigny, Marquise de, 117.
Marsan, Marie Louise de Rohan-Soubise, Comtesse de, 43, 115, 116, 188, 279 f., 314, 316, 318.
Martainville, Madame de, 159, 161, 187, 243.
Maupeou (Chancellor) 8, 343.
Maurepas, Comte de, 10 f., 57, 116, 122, 130, 140, 147, 155, 160, 171, 186, 212, 226, 238 f., 338.
Maury, Abbé (quoted), 371.
Mazarin, Louise de Durfort, Duchesse de, 227.
Melbourne, Lady, 382.
Mendoça, Don José, 257.
Mercier (quoted), 88, 103.
Mercy, A. François de (quoted), 37 f., 60, 75, 88, 102, 117, 121, 123 f., 182, 183.
Mesdames the Princesses, 3, 5, 45.
Miewkowski, 164, 166, 170.
Mirabeau, Victor Riquetti, Marquis de, 297, 301, 353 f., 362 f., 369 f., 377, 390.
Mirepoix, Maréchale de, 160, 323.
„ Marquis de, 160.
Miroménil, M. de, 12.
Molleville, Bertrand de, 373, 405.
Monaco, Joseph, Prince de, 328, 388.
Monsieur (The Comte de Provence), 3, 44, 120, 151, 337, 338, 345, 369.
Montbarrey, Chevalier de (quoted), 50, 151, 225.
„ Prince de, 55 note, 170.
Montbazon, Duc de, 188.
„ Aglaë Louise de Conflans, Duchesse de, 188, 227, 241, 250, 255, 282.
Montboissier, Comte de, 340.
Montespan, Marquise de, 84.
Montesquieu, Baron de, 193, 253, 268.
Montesquiou, General, 453.
Montesson, Madame de, 302.
Montmorency, Mathieu de, 297.
Montmorin, M. de, 334 f., 337, 355 f., 364, 372.
Montpensier, Duc de, 416, 420, 452, 457, 463 f.
Montrond, M. de, 511.
Monville, M. de, 462.
Morency, Madame de, Suzanne *Quillet*.

Morris, Mrs., 272.
Mortemart, Duc de, 340.
Muy, M. de, 12, 20, 104.

Narbonne, Chevalier de, 390 ff., 398, 402 f., 405.
Narbonne, Mgr. Dillon, Archbp. of, 159, 340, 513.
Naudin, 376.
Navaris, Mme. de, 186.
Necker, M., 103, 300 f., 337, 349, 358 f., 361, 366.
"Nigretta," Duchesse de *Fleury*.
Noailles-Mouchy, Duc de, 508 f.
,, Duchesse de, 40, 42, 508 f.,
,, Comte de, 71, 77, 149, 191, 193.
,, Vicomte de, 173 note, 191, 210, 220, 235, 297.
,, Family of, 344.
Noiseau, M. de, 356.
Normandie, Duc de, Son of Louis XVI., 311.
North, Lord, 287.

Oliva, 312, 316.
Orléans, Philippe Duc d', 2 note, 9, 296.
,, Louis Philippe Joseph (son of the above, Duc de Chartres till 1785) "Egalité," Duc d', 9, 47, 65, 66, 80, 83, 86, 100, 105, 109, 129, 155, 241, 292 f., 296, 298 f., 307, 321, 329 f., 341 f., 346, 356, 359, 361 ff., 371 f., 379, 387, 410, 430 f., 445 ff., 449 f., 452, 461 f., 468, 499 f.
,, Duchesse d', 111.
,, Elizabeth Charlotte, Duchesse d' (quoted), 84.
Ormesson, M. d', 337.
Orvilliers, Comte d', 155, 186.
Osmond, M. d', 513.
Ossun, Comtesse d', 348.

Pache (War Minister), 451, 455.
Paddock, Miss, 153.
Paige, M. de, 63.
Panchaud, 301, 356 f., 359.
Panin, Prince, 16 note, 56.
Parein, 493.
Paris, Mgr. de Beaumont, Archbishop of, 113, 340.
Pays (steward), 125, 130.
Penthièvre, Duc de, 450.
"Perdita," Mrs. Mary *Robinson*.
Perez, M., 258.
Philippeaux (commissioner), 491.
Pitt, 398.
Placide (acrobat), 181.
Poix, M. de, 65, 431.
Polastron, M. de, 507.
,, Madame de, 514 note.
Polignac, Comtesse Diane de, 72 f., 107, 182, 285, 371.
,, Comtesse Jules de, 72 f., 107, 108, 111, 119, 129, 175, 182 f., 283 f., 299, 302, 317 f., 348, 388.
Pons, M. de, 19.
Pontdevez, M. de, 172 note.
Portail, Jeanne du, Marquise de *Conflans*.
Potocka, Countess, 29, 109.
Praslin, Duc de Choiseul-, 513 note.
Prieur, 434.
Provence, Duc de Bourbon- (afterwards Monsieur), 151, 345.

Quentin, 501 note.
Quevauvillers, M. de, 452, 458.
Quillet, Mme. (Mme. Morency), Suzanne Giroux, 411 f.

Radziwil, Princess, 51.
Rawdon (Lord), 400.
Renaud, Mlle., 225.
Repnine, Prince, 50.
Reveillon, 359.
Richard (Doctor), 3.
Richelieu, Maréchal de, 160, 334, 349.
Rivarol (quoted), 359, 362 note.
Robespierre, 498 note, 501.
Robinson, Mrs. Mary ("Perdita"), 242 f.
Rochambeau, Comte de, 185, 191, 194 f., 200, 202 f., 210 f., 218, 222, 224, 226, 232 f., 235 f., 253, 273 f., 340, 378, 390, 404, 412 f., 417, 419, 422 f.
,, Vicomte de, 193, 213, 228, 418.
Roche-Aymon, Cardinal de La, 116.
Rochefoucauld, Duc de La, 340.
,, de Roye, Pauline de la, Duchesse de *Biron*.
Rodney, Admiral, 145, 253, 267, 398.
Rohan, Louis René, Ed., Cardinal de, 116, 122, 188, 245, 305 f., 312 f., 359.
,, Camille, Prince de, 388.
Ronsin, 493.
Rosenberg, Count von, 60.
Rossignol (Captain), 480 ff., 492, 494.
Rothe, Madame de, 42, 159, 513.

Rullecour, M. de, 24.
Rutaut, M., 449, 498.
Rzewuski, Count, 25.

Sabatier de Cabre, Abbé, 341.
Sabran, Madame de, 368.
Saint-Germain, M. de, 104 f., 107.
Saint-Mesmes, Comte de, 193.
Saint-Simon, Marquis de, 232, 235.
Saisseval, M. de, 356.
Salano, Admiral Don, 237 note.
Salicetti, M. de, 370.
Salomon, General, 480.
Sartines, M. de, 12, 160, 162, 164, 179, 186, 225.
Ségur, Comte de, 31, 79, 150, 211, 215, 225, 229, 238, 240, 249 f., 297.
,, Maréchal de, 297.
,, Vicomte de, 191, 215, 253, 259 ff., 266, 268, 270.
Semonville, M. de, 356.
Servan, General, 424, 468.
Sheldon, Captain, 164, 166, 170, 234 note, 429.
Sidi Mouctar, 167 f.
Silly, 380.
Simiane, Madame de, 186.
Smith, Mr., 86.
Soubise, Charles de Rohan, Prince and Maréchal de, 160, 280, 314, 349.
Spencer, Lady, 382.
Stackelberg, M. de, 16, 26, 49 f., 62.
Staël, Baronne de, 391.
Stainville, Beatrice de Choiseul-, Duchesse de *Gramont*.
Stanislaus II., King of Poland, 138.
Stanton, Gilbert, 166.
Stormont, Lord, 145, 150.
Strathavon, Lord, 345.
Suffolk, 144.
Sutton, Doctor, 4.

Talleyrand, Prince de, Bishop of Autun, 297, 301, 330, 354 f., 358 f., 372, 386 note, 391, 393 f., 399, 515.
Tamara, General, 334.
Tarleton, Colonel, 233 f.
Ternay, Comte de, 192, 196 f., 199, 205, 208, 210, 212 f., 223.
Terray, Joseph Marie, Abbé, 8, 12.
Tessé, Comte de, 97, 107.
Tort, 102.
Toulouse, Loménie de Brienne, Archbishop of, 340, 348.
Tronchin, Doctor, 2 note, 3.
Trumboldt, Governor 21
Turgot, M., 12, 46, 102 f., 359.

Valence, General, 466.
Valentinois, Madame de, 328.
Vaubernier, Jeanne, Comtesse du *Barry*.
Vaudreuil, Comte de, 73, 75, 108, 163 f., 172, 183, 266, 274, 337 f.
Vaux, Comte de, 184.
Ventadoux, Madame de (*née* Rohan), 281.
Vergennes, Comte de, 12, 17, 19 f., 30, 47 f., 54 f., 62 f., 91, 95, 138 f., 146 f., 150, 152, 160, 240, 313, 315, 349, 354, 357.
Vermond, Abbé, 75.
Vestris (dancer), 282 note.
Vigée-Lebrun, Mme. (quoted), 326.
Villequier, Madame de, 186.
Villeroy, M. de, 94.
Villette, Marquis de, 282.
Vioménil, Baron de, 59, 193, 268, 270.
Virville, Madame de, 113.
Voyer, Marc-René, Marquis de, 127, 256, 276.
Vrillière, Duc de la, 62, 69.

Wall, M., 185.
Walpole, Horace (quoted), 39, 67, 84, 171, 510.
Washington, George, General, 141, 204, 210 f., 220 f., 224, 229 f., 233, 287.
Weedon, General, 233.
Westermann, General, 491.
Wurtemberg, Adam, Prince of, 512.
,, (*née* Czartoriska), Princess of, 512.

"Zilia," Duchesse de *Fleury*.

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